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HC stays clearing of 400 acres of 'forest' land

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BUSINESS

Manufacturing sector growth hits 8-month high

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SPORTS

Struggling KKR, SRH look to reignite campaign

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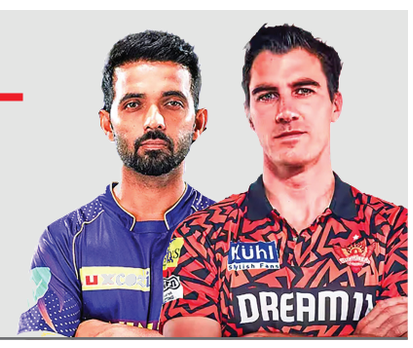

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

روزنامہ سالار بنگلور

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Chitradurga: 3 dead after car crashes, flips in air 15 times

CHITRADURGA, 2 APRIL

A devastating car crash on NH-150 A in Yadgiri has resulted in the deaths of three family members, including two young boys. The driver, Moula Abdul, 35, lost control of the speeding vehicle, which crashed into the divider and flipped at least 15 times, sending the occupants flying into the air. The crash was reported near Bommakkanahalli Majid in Monakalmur taluk, between Challakere and Ballari, in Chitradurga district. The accident, which occurred on Tuesday morning, was captured on CCTV camera. The deceased are Abdul, and his two sons — 15-year-old Rehman and 10-year-old Sameer. The accident also left Abdul's wife, Salima Begum, 31, his 75-year-old mother, Fatima, and another son, Hussein, with serious injuries. The family, from Yadgiri, were travelling from Bengaluru to their native place when the accident occurred. *—PTI*

SC flays T'gana CM for mockery of 10th Schedule

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday lashed out at Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy saying in the assembly that there would be no bye-elections even if BRS MLAs switched sides. "If this is said on the floor of the house, your Chief Minister is making a mockery of the Tenth Schedule," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih remarked on the alleged statement made on 26 March. Justice Gavai noted when a politician says something in the assembly, it has some sanctity. "Something being said at Ramlila Maidan is different than what is being said on the floor of the house," he said. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 3

Val Kilmer, 'Top Gun' & 'The Doors' actor, dies at 65

LOS ANGELES, 2 APRIL

Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor famed for his roles as Iceman in 'Top Gun', Batman in 'Batman Forever', and Jim Morrison in 'The Doors', has died at 65. Kilmer died on Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, confirmed. The actor's death was attributed to complications from pneumonia, following his recovery from throat cancer in 2014. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 6

Setback for CM as HC allows ED to probe MUDA case

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

High Court on Wednesday allowed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to investigate all accused in the MUDA site allotment case, except former MUDA commissioner DB Natesh.

ED had approached the division bench comprising Chief Justice NV Anjaria and Justice KV Aravind seeking a stay on a single-judge bench order that had quashed the summons issued to Natesh.

"Investigation under the PMLA Act is not to be hampered or put on hold, nor would its continuance be affected adversely in relation to the alleged scam," the court stated.

It further stated that the impugned judgment and order should not prevent the ED from proceeding with the inquiry and investigation in accordance with the law concerning other accused individuals and persons who may need to be questioned or investigated, notwithstanding the impugned judgment and directions in the petitioner's case.

"Enforcement Directorate shall be at liberty to utilise all documents and materials gathered, recovered, and secured during the search and seizure at the petitioner's premises. The agency may also use recorded statements for the remainder of the investigation, in accordance with the law," the division bench added.

Alongside the Lokayukta, the ED is probing the MUDA site allotment case, in which Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi BM, her brother Mallikarjuna Swamy, and land seller Devaraju are among the accused.

In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land, which had been 'acquired' by the MUDA.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme instead of 3.16 acres of her land, where it developed a residential layout. *—PTI*

Waqf Bill will not interfere in Muslim religious matter: Shah

In LS, Oppn says the 'unconstitutional' bill will target Muslims

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The ruling NDA on Wednesday launched a feisty defence of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha amid the Opposition's charge that it was unconstitutional and targeted Muslims.

Home Minister Amit Shah asserted that the government had no intention of interfering in their religious matters and was solely driven by the aim of transparent administration of Waqf properties.

This was during the day-long debate.

Minorities Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the proposed law constitutionally guaranteed freedom in religious affairs.

The Bill has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties, he said.

Both ministers asserted that the proposed reforms would ensure the welfare of poor Muslims and women.

BJP was backed by key allies TDP, JD(U), Shiv Sena and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), while the INDIA put up a united show in opposing the bill.

Akhilesh Yadav *PHOTO: PTI*

Shah rejected the most common criticism that the appointment of non-Muslims in the Waqf council and boards violated a community's right to manage its own affairs.

Shah said the government is not going to have any say in the matters of Waqf, endowments made by Muslims for religiously charitable and pious purposes, adding that the council and boards are aimed at the management of the properties. He cited a host of instances from across the country about vast properties being claimed by different state Waqf boards, with a section of people involved in their management making personal gains while doing little for the community.

"This money is of the poor Muslims not for a few moneybags," he said, citing the meagre income of Rs 163 crore from Waqf properties.

Citing speeches of several opposition leaders, including RJD President Lalu Prasad Yadav, in 2013, he said even they had noted the rampant property grab in the name of Waqf law.

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi accused the government of the Bill as a tool to "dilute the Constitution, defame minority communities, divide Indian society, and disenfranchise minorities". Gogoi argued that the bill had not been adequately discussed with minority representatives.

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the bill is a BJP's ploy for polarisation following its reverses in the Lok Sabha polls, alleging that it will send a wrong message to the world denting the country's secular image. The Bill will prove to be a "waterloo" for BJP as some of its allies might be claiming to support the bill but inside they are not happy about the development, he said. "Bringing Waqf Bill is the BJP's political game, it is a new form of their communal politics. In 2023, four meetings of the Minority Commission were held, and yet, there was no mention of the need for a Waqf amendment bill. I ask the government -was this bill drafted by the Minority Affairs Ministry or some other department?" The debate was ongoing at the time of publishing. *—PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 3

> **Govt does not want to interfere in religious activities of Muslims. Waqf Mutawali, Waqif, Waqf will all be Muslims, but it will be seen whether the property of Waqf is being maintained properly or not** —Amit Shah, Home Minister

PARLIAMENT PASSED THE IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGNERS BILL TO REGULATE IMMIGRATION AND ENTRY OF FOREIGNERS IN INDIA. HERE IT WHAT IT MEANS:

Immigration officers can now inspect travel documents not just at the point of entry, but also during a foreigner's stay, transit or movement within India.

All visa-related matters are now under the direct control of the Centre. Earlier the power laid it states.

All carriers — air, sea, or land — must report passenger and crew details in real-time to civil authority.

District magistrates, cops and registration officers must be notified about:

- Accommodation provided to foreign guests.
- Enrolment of foreigners in universities.
- Foreign nationals receiving treatment at hospitals.

Govt control over foreigner-frequented zones:
The Bill empowers the Centre to restrict or shut down access to locations frequently used by foreigners, including imposing use conditions or limiting entry to certain categories for security reasons.

STRICTER PENALTIES:

2–7 years jails and Rs 10 lakh fine for forged passports or visas.

5-year jail & Rs 5 lakh fine for unauthorised entry into restricted areas.

PHOTOS: FREEPIK

UPI down for many users; second outage in a week

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

The Unified Payment Interface (UPI services were down across major apps on Wednesday with 53 per cent users facing difficulty while transferring funds via these apps.

This is the second time in a week that digital transactions have been hit by an UPI outrage, the first being on 26 March. In fact, 449 complaints were reported till 8 pm on Wednesday.

UPI is an instant transaction interface developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) that operates retail payments and settlement systems.

UPI platforms like PhonePe, Google Pay, and Paytm were largely affected, making users in the country panicky.

"Looks like UPI is down again !!" a user posted on X.

According to Worldline's 'India Digital Payments Report for 2H 2024', the volume of UPI transaction increased by 42 per cent year-on-year from 65.77 billion to 93.23 billion in the second half of 2024. The value of transactions too increased by 31 per cent from 99.68 trillion to 130.19 trillion during that duration. *—PTI*

India retaliates as Pak violates ceasefire at LoC

JAMMU, 2 APRIL

A ceasefire breach occurred along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu Kashmir's Poonch district on Tuesday, as Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing following a mine explosion. The incident took place at 1.10pm, prompting a swift response from the Indian Army.

According to defence officials, the Indian Army retaliated "effectively" to the ceasefire violation, ensuring the situation remained under control. Although the Indian Army did not confirm any casualties on the Pakistani side, official sources revealed that five enemy soldiers were injured in the explosion and subsequent exchange of fire.

The incident marks a rare breach of the ceasefire agreement along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir *PHOTO: PTI*

The incident marks a rare breach of the ceasefire agreement along the LoC in Jammu Kashmir since India and Pakistan renewed their agreement on 25 February, 2021. However, several incidents have occurred in recent weeks, including an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack that killed two Indian Army personnel and injured another.

A flag meeting was held between Indian and Pakistani military officials on 21 February to de-escalate tensions along the LoC. The meeting highlighted the need to maintain peace along the borders. Despite this, ceasefire violations have continued to occur in the Poonch-Rajouri sector.

The Indian Army has maintained dominance over the LoC, with the situation being closely monitored. The breach has raised concerns about the fragility of the ceasefire agreement and the need for continued diplomatic efforts to maintain peace along the LoC. *—PTI*

IN 6 WEEKS

K'taka HC orders suspension of bike taxis

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that bike taxi aggregators, including Rapido, Uber, and Ola, must cease operations in the state within six weeks. This decision follows the dismissal of petitions filed by these companies, which sought legal recognition for bike taxis.

Justice BM Shyam Prasad delivered the verdict, stating that the court cannot direct the state to frame regulations or register non-transport vehicles as transport vehicles. The petitioners had requested permission for the registration of motorcycles as transport vehicles and implementation of a legal framework for bike taxis.

- The State government has been given three months to frame the necessary rules and guidelines for bike taxis.

Rapido, which had been providing bike taxi services, had sought directions to restrain authorities from interfering with their business. However, the court's ruling brings an end to their operations, along with those of Uber and Ola.

The court's decision is a significant setback for bike taxi operators, who had been operating in the state. Rapido had been functioning under interim relief granted by the court in April 2022, which had restrained authorities from taking coercive action against them.

The State government has been given three months to frame the necessary rules and guidelines for bike taxis. Until then, bike taxi aggregators must halt operations within six weeks. This ruling is expected to impact the livelihoods of thousands of bike taxi drivers in the state. *—ANI*

Liberation Day is here: Trump on tariffs

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

US President Donald Trump's rollout of reciprocal tariffs could cost India $3.1 billion, according to a report from CareEdge Ratings.

This would mean that Trump's tariff could cut India's GDP by 0.1 per cent. The world is on edge as US President Donald Trump is set to announce reciprocal tariffs today on 2 April– a day which is being referred as the 'Liberation Day'.

A report from the Washington Post had said that Trump, along with his team, has created a plan to add a 20 per cent tax on most goods that are imported in the United States.

Trump will announce the tariffs in the Rose Garden of the White House. Although there has been no information regarding the schedule of the event, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said that the tariffs will be announced at 4 pm Washington time on April 2, which is 1.30 am IST on 3, April. *—PTI*

5 SECTORS ON THE EDGE

- Electronics
- Gems and jewellery
- Pharmaceuticals
- Textile and apparel exports
- Auto component makers

Rider killed as KSRTC bus hits bicycle in Mysuru

MYSURU, 2 APRIL

A bicycle rider was killed on the spot after a KSRTC bus hit him near Hampapura bus stand's gate in KR Nagara taluk on Wednesday.

Police identified the deceased as Chandodu Shetty, 54, a priest at a temple in Hampapura village of KR Nagar taluk. The driver and bus conductor fled the spot after the accident. Villagers blocked the entrance to the Hampapura bus stand, demanding compensation and action against the bus driver. KR Nagar police have registered a case.

—Salar News

Conductor hangs himself inside bus in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 2 APRIL

Dejected by his superiors not granting him leave for attending his niece's wedding, a conductor of the state-run bus service in Belagavi ended his life by hanging himself inside the bus he was attached to on Tuesday morning.

Belagavi Deputy Commissioner of Police Rohan Jagadish told news persons that around 6.30am, conductor Balachandra Hukoji was found hanging inside the bus which he was in charge of. Hailing from Ramdurga taluk in Belagavi, Hukoji was staying in a rented house with his family.

The officer said preliminary investigations revealed that Hukoji had requested for leave to attend his niece's wedding, but his application was rejected.

—Salar News

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Man kills 3 family members, later dies by suicide

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 2 APRIL

The incident occurred in Magalu village, Karnataka, where a 40-year-old man, Ratnakar Gowda, fatally shot three members of his family before turning the gun on himself. The victims included his mother-in-law, Jyothi, 50, sister-in-law, Nadini Sindhu, 24, and six-year-old daughter, Moulya.

According to police reports, Gowda, a school driver, used a Single Barrel Breech Loading firearm. His brother-in-law, Avinash, 38, sustained a leg injury in the shooting. Sindhu's husband Avinash, 38, was also shot in the leg and is being treated in hospital, police said. Prior to the incident, Gowda recorded a selfie video, alleging that his family had deceived him and accusing his wife of abandoning him due to a family dispute. Police suspect this dispute as the primary motive behind the killings.

—PTI

WATER TARIFF HIKE IN CITY INEVITABLE: DKS

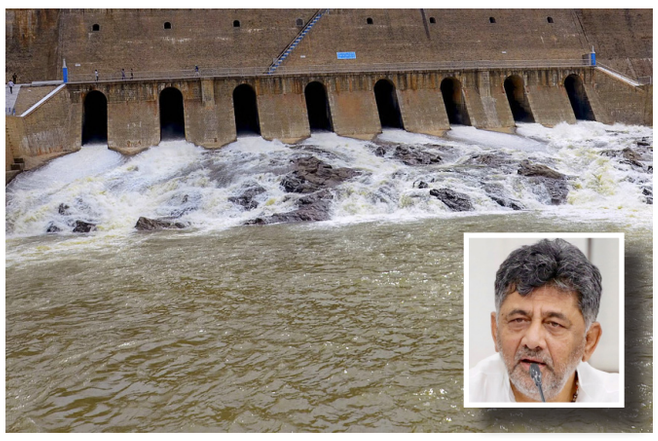
He accuses BJP of being anti-farmer for opposing milk price hike

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday said the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is likely to hike the City's water tariff by one paisa per litre.

Defending the Congress government amid the BJP's protests against rising prices, he accused the saffron party of being "anti-farmer" for opposing the milk price hike, asserting that the increase was intended to benefit farmers.

On Wednesday, the BJP launched a statewide 'day and night' protest against the Congress government, accusing it of imposing a financial burden on the public by increasing the prices of milk and diesel, hiking power tariffs and raising bus and metro fares, among other measures.



DK Shivakumar claims the price rise in Karnataka is lower compared to other states *PHOTO: PTI*

"BJP is not talking about the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) reducing power tariffs for certain sections. As for the milk price hike, shouldn't we support farmers? Let them (the BJP-led central government) reduce the prices of cattle fodder, petrol, and diesel to help farmers. BJP is anti-farmer," Shivakumar claimed in response to a question about the BJP's protest. Speaking to reporters, he said that, compared to other states, the price rise in Karnataka is lower. "Even with the water tariff, we have no other choice. We have to increase it by one paisa or half a paisa per litre; we can't raise it more. I have instructed that the tariff be reduced for the poor. I have asked the board (BWSSB) to decide. We will not hike rates for small houses," said the Deputy CM, who is also in charge of Bengaluru's city development. *—PTI*

Speculations have been rife about a possible reshuffle based on evaluation of the performance of the ministers *PHOTO: PTI*

DKS bins speculations about Cabinet reshuffle

HUBBALLI, 2 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday rejected speculations regarding possible discussions with the Congress high command on the cabinet reshuffle during his and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's visit to New Delhi, calling it "false information".

Siddaramaiah and Shivakuma flew to Delhi on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters here, he said discussion will take place on the party's nominations for four vacant MLC posts.

Demnads Bharat Ratna for Shivakumara Swami

Shivakumar urged the Centre to award Bharat Ratna to seer Shivakumara Swami for his invaluable contributions to society. "Sri Shivakumara Swamiji has given anna, aksharа and ashraya (food, education and shelter) to lakhs of people cutting across caste and religion. The Centre must consider him for the Bharat Ratna award," he appealed to Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at a function organised at Siddaganga mutt to celebrate the 118th birth anniversary of the seer. *—Agencies*

BJP leader BS Yediyurappa with others during a protest against price hikes in State and the suspension of BJP MLAs from Assembly at Vidhan Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BJP hits the streets against price rise, MLAs' suspension

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

The BJP on Wednesday launched state-wide protests against the Karnataka government, alleging that it "failed" to contain rising prices. The opposition party staged demonstrations at the district and Taluk headquarters and revealed plans of more protests till 13 April.

In Bengaluru, BJP State President BY Vijayendra and his father BS Yediyurappa led the protests at Freedom Park. Party leader R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, several MLAs and former ministers took part in the protest.

In his address to the gathering, Vijayendra alleged that the government has deceived the public and its policies are negatively impacting the poor.

"This is not the government which does what it says but it's the one which is misleading people. The government is branding the poor with the price rise. No one is living peacefully. The way the government increased the prices of petrol and diesel, milk, stamp duty and medical expenses should be an eye-opener," he said.

The saffron party also staged a protest on Wednesday, terming the suspension of 18 BJP MLAs from the State Assembly as "dictatorial" and "undemocratic" and urged Speaker UT Khader to reverse the decision.

The protest was held in front of Kengal Hanumanthaiah statue at the Vidhana Soudha premises, wherein BJP legislators called the Speaker "one-sided" and "pro-Congress".

They warned of intensifying the protest if the suspension was not revoked immediately.

The 18 BJP MLAs were suspended for six months from the Assembly on 21 March for "indiscipline" and "disrespecting" the Speaker. *—PTI*

HC madrasa hearing today, Mysuru on alert

MYSURU, 2 APRIL

Mysuru police have tightened security in sensitive areas ahead of the High Court hearing on the reopening of a madrasa that was shut down nine years ago, following the murder of right-wing activist Raju.

The high court will hear on 3 April a petition by Alima Sadiya Trust, seeking the madrasa's reopening.

Reserve forces have been deployed in key locations of Narasimharaja assembly segment, especially the disputed site in Kyathamaranahalli, which is dominated by Muslim community.

Mysuru district administration is planning to hold a third meeting with leaders of two communities regarding the reopening of a religious site in Kyathamaranahalli, which has been shut for nearly a decade, at the DC's office on Thursday.

The first meeting was held on 14 March. Muslim leaders requested permission to run a madrassa as before, saying that it would be used only to impart religious education and that no prayers would be conducted there or a mosque will be built.

Local Hindu leaders opposed this, saying that neither a mosque nor a madrassa should be established there and suggested providing land elsewhere for the madrassa.

PHOTO: PTI

- The first meeting was held on 14 March. Muslim leaders requested permission to run a madrassa as before, saying that it would be used only to impart religious education and that no prayers would be conducted there or a mosque will be built.

Deputy Commissioner G Lakshmikanth Reddy, who is hearing both sides on behalf of the district administration, is to submit a report about the outcome of the meeting on 3 April to the high court. *—Salar News*

New timings for govt offices in north due to heat

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

The State government has revised office hours in nine districts to protect workers and the public from intense summer heat. The new timings will be in effect throughout April and May in Kalyana Karnataka's Kalaburagi, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Ballari, Vijayanagar, Yadgir, and Kittur Karnataka's Vijayapura and Bagalkot. Government offices will operate from 8 am to 1. 30pm.

This decision follows a request from the Karnataka State Government Employees Association president, Shadakshari, to modify working hours.

The move comes after record-breaking temperatures, with Kalaburagi hitting 42.8°C and an average of 41°C in Kalyana Karnataka districts. This change aims to ease the heat burden on both employees and the public.

The order said, "The government servants in these districts shall perform their duty as usual without any omission/ interruption during the changed hours. Without causing any inconvenience to the public, the employees shall perform duty without any time limit. *—Salar News*

Harassed by ex-boyfriend, student attempts suicide

HUBBALLI, 2 APRIL

- According to police, the second-year student attempted suicide in her women's hostel after enduring constant "harassment and blackmail".

A 20-year-old paramedical college student attempted suicide by consuming pills after allegedly being harassed and blackmailed with her photographs by an acquaintance, police said on Wednesday.

Following the incident on Tuesday, the 23-year-old accused, who was previously in a relationship with her, was arrested, they added.

The matter came to light when the Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute (KMCRI) informed the Vidyanagar police station about the woman's suicide attempt, police said.

According to police, the second-year student attempted suicide in her women's hostel after enduring constant "harassment and blackmail".

Citing a preliminary inquiry, a police officer stated that the woman and the accused were previously in a relationship. However, after their breakup, he allegedly began harassing and blackmailing her with her photographs.

"The woman's parents filed a complaint accusing the suspect of physical assault, mental harassment, and blackmail using her photographs and messages. Both the woman and the accused hail from Kundgol town, but for the past few months, he had been trying to harass her," the senior police officer said. *—PTI*

DAY OUT AT VIDHANA SOUDHA

Students from Bengaluru DPS (East) on Wednesday visited Vidhana Soudha to study the function of both houses of the Legislature *PHOTO: SALAR*

Pedestrian killed as KSRTC driver suffers heart attack

MYSURU, 2 APRIL

A 42-year-old KSRTC bus driver died of cardiac arrest while driving, and the tragedy led to a woman's death after the rudderless bus moved her down near Dammanakatte in HD Kote taluk on Wednesday.

According to police, the deceased have been identified as driver Sunil Kumar of Mysuru and Lakshmamma, 55, of Dammanakatte village in HD Kote taluk.

The incident took place near Dammanakote when Kumar, who was driving the bus from Mananadavadi to HD Kote town, slumped onto the steering wheel. The bus moved down Lakshmamma, hit electric poles and veered off the road into an agricultural field. *—Salar News*

- The incident took place near Dammanakote when Kumar, who was driving the bus from Mananadavadi to HD Kote town, slumped onto the steering wheel. The bus moved down Lakshmamma, hit electric poles and veered off the road into a field.

TO MAINTAIN MISSILES

BEL, IAF sign Rs 593 cr deal

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), announced on Wednesday that it has signed a contract with the Indian Air Force worth Rs 593.22 crore for providing maintenance services for the Akash Missile System, which was supplied by the company.

With this, BEL has commenced the financial year 2025-26 with an order acquisition of Rs 593.22 crore, the company said in a release.

Furthermore, the company has concluded negotiations with customers for the acquisition of orders worth Rs 5,000 crore, it added.

Shares of BEL on Wednesday closed 3.27 per cent lower at Rs 282.45 apiece on the National Stock Exchange. It was the biggest laggard on the 50-share index. Its market capitalisation at the end of Wednesday's session stood at Rs 2.07 lakh crore. The company has achieved a turnover of Rs 23,000 crore in the financial year 2024-25.

BEL has concluded negotiations with customers for the acquisition of orders worth Rs 5,000 crore *PHOTO: UNSPLASH*

Ferrari opens shop, netizens ask 'where are roads'

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

One would think Ferrari reportedly paying Rs 8 lakh as rent for a 10,000-square-foot showroom space in Bengaluru would bring laurels to the IT hub. Instead, the internet is trolling the city, asking where the roads are to drive the supercar.

Bengaluru's first Ferrari showroom opened near the ITC factory in Meenakunte Hosur village, near Kempegowda International Airport, towards the end of March.

While it may already be a crowd-puller, it has also sparked a raging online debate, once again highlighting the city's pothole-ridden roads.

Tongue-in-cheek, 'X' user @DoctorC28 asked, "Where will we even drive this car in Blore? The potholes are so deep, how will the car come out of it?" Another user, Sujay (@sujay_phadke), suggested that luxury carmakers should themselves provide the necessary infrastructure—perhaps even build a few roads—to make it possible to drive a Ferrari in Bengaluru.

The showroom near the airport will also deal in pre-owned Ferraris. Mumbai and New Delhi each have a Ferrari showroom *PHOTO: FERRARI*

'X' user StayTrue (@mkart72) had a similar take: "Hope they sell roads too, as an accessory," he joked. The discussion also veered towards the showroom's compliance with the 60 per cent Kannada signage rule.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) issued a directive in December 2023 mandating that all commercial establishments under its jurisdiction display name boards with at least 60 per cent Kannada text by February 28, 2024.

However, 'X' user Aniruddha Vasudeva (@VasudevaAnirudh) pointed out that the showroom's signage only appeared disproportionate because "Ferrari" is a three-syllable word in Kannada. "The text height in both languages seems to be equal," he observed, momentarily settling the debate. Of course, many were simply excited about getting their very own Ferrari showroom. "It's a whole vibe," some declared. 'X' user @CricwithNick added, "The prancing horse in Bengaluru? That's pure class rolling in."

Incidentally, in September 2021, a speeding Ferrari crashed into a median in Yelahanka, with overspeeding on wet roads suspected to have caused the accident.

According to media reports, Bengaluru already has around 20 to 30 Ferraris on its roads. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Lakshyaraj Singh becomes R'than royal family head

UDAIPUR, 2 APRIL

Lakshyaraj Singh, a member of Mewar's erstwhile royal family, was formally enthroned on Wednesday at Udaipur City Palace. The ceremony, steeped in tradition, saw Singh walk towards the revered throne of his ancestors, clad in pristine white attire. Ceremonial yagya was performed in palace courtyard, offering prayers to deities and past Maharanas. The event was attended by dignitaries, including Odisha Deputy Chief Minister Kanakvardhan Singh, who is also Singh's father-in-law. The enthronement comes amid a bitter dispute over the rightful heir to the dynasty's legacy, sparked by a parallel coronation ceremony held in Chittorgarh Fort last year. *—PTI*

Two women Naxalites killed in encounter in MP

BHOPAL, 2 APRIL

A gun battle between police and Naxalites in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district resulted in the deaths of two women Naxalites, each carrying a Rs 14 lakh reward on their heads. The encounter occurred under Bichhiya police station limits, according to Director General Police Kailash Makwana. A self-loading rifle, an ordinary rifle, a wireless set, and various daily items were recovered from the scene. A search operation is ongoing for additional Naxalites. The two women Naxalites were identified as Mamta and Pramila, both members of the Bhoramdev Area Committee of the Maoist organisation. This marks the first time six Maoists have been killed in two encounters within one-and-a-half months in the state. *—PTI*

Mahayuti has 'Ghajini syndrome' on farmers: Cong

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

The Congress party has launched a scathing attack on the Maharashtra government, accusing it of suffering from "Ghajini syndrome" - a reference to the Bollywood film about a man with short-term memory loss. The criticism comes after Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar ruled out a crop loan waiver for farmers. State Congress president Harshvardhan Sapkal alleged that the BJP-led alliance had promised to grant loan waivers and increase the stipend for women during the poll campaign, but reneged on these promises after taking power. Sapkal demanded that the government provide loan waivers to farmers before the next sowing season. He also criticised the government's decision to ask farmers to repay loans by 31 March, calling it a "sudden reversal" of their earlier stance. *—PTI*

Notorious criminal linked to Sambhal violence held

SAMBHAL, 2 APRIL

A notorious criminal who was once part of a gang led by Shariq Satha, and allegedly a key figure behind last year's violent incidents in Sambhal, has landed in police net, officials said. Dilip alias Harish has been active in the world of crime for over 30 years, had over 40 cases against him and carried a cash reward of Rs 25,000. Meanwhile, Zafar Ali, the president of Shahi Jama Masjid's bail plea hearing was postponed to 4 April due to the unavailability of the case diary. Ali was arrested on 23 March, and his bail plea was initially set for hearing on 27 March. Four civilians were killed in the violence that erupted during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid in the Kot Garvi area of the city on 24 November last year. *—PTI*

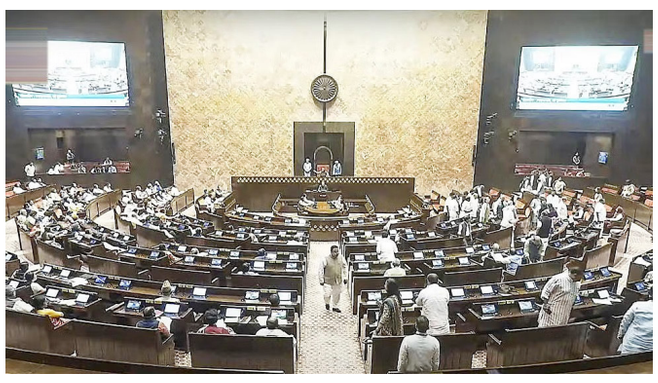
Parl passes Immigration and Foreigners Bill

Centre to exert control over places 'frequented by foreigners'

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The Rajya Sabha too passed the Bill by voice vote after various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated.

One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10 lakh.



Minister for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the Bill simplifies the existing provisions *PHOTO: PTI*

- The Bill mandates mandatory reporting about foreigners by hotels, universities, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking

We want people to visit this country and see the development works done by Modi and tell their countrymen.
-Nityanand Rai, Home Affairs Minister
The point is deeply, saddened or crippled or influenced by the fake concept of Islamophobia.
-Sandosh Kumar, CPI(M) MP
This Bill sends a message that all foreigners are potential criminals to be viewed with serious suspicion by India... India is to act as an unwelcome fortress.
-Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Congress MP
Any foreigner posing a threat to India's integrity will be denied entry into or permission to stay. What kind of threat? Threat to the nation or threat to the government?
-Fauzia Khan, NCP-SCP MP

The Bill also seeks to ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India. The proposed legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

During the discussion, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said, "It was necessary to bring this Bill to make our universities, education system and economy world class level."

Rai stressed that the Bill addresses the need to deal with foreign nationals who indulge in anti-national activities. He added that the Bill provides for mandatory reporting of information about the admission in hospitals or their place of residence.

The legislation empowers the central government to exert control over places that are "frequented by any foreigner" and require the owner to close the premises, permit its use under specified conditions, or refuse admission to all or a "specified class" of foreigners.

Matters relating to foreigners and immigration are presently administered through four legislations: the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; the Foreigners Act, 1946; and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. The new Bill repeals these laws.

While the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 consists of several existing provisions in the four Acts proposed to be repealed after simplification and harmonisation, it also has certain new provisions to meet the present-day requirements. *—PTI*

AIMPLB to contest Waqf Bill in court, hold protests

NEW DELHI/BAREILLY/ BHUBANESWAR 2 APRIL

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Wednesday said it will challenge the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in court and take the fight against the "black law" that threatens the community's rights to the streets.

Criticising the proposed legislation at a press conference, AIMPLB member Md Adeeb claimed it was an attempt to seize Muslim's properties.

"They have started this spectacle thinking they can take away our property. Can this be accepted? Do not think that we are defeated," Adeeb said. "We will go to court. We will not rest until this (proposed) law is withdrawn,"

AIMPLB spokesperson Mohammad Ali Mohsin said, "We will organise programmes across the country just like farmers did. If needed, we will block roads and take all peaceful measures to oppose the Bill. Our aim is to put an end to this black law."

Several other Muslim organisations and parties voiced their concerns over the Bill.

"We are accused of making illegal encroachments on Waqf properties, but our ancestors dedicated their properties to Waqf. Many rulers did the same, building temples and donating properties to them. Now, those very properties are being taken away," Ittihad-e-Millat Council chief Maulana Tauqeer Raza said.

Similarly, Odisha's Opposition party the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has seven members in the Rajya Sabha, will also oppose the Bill, the party's Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sasmit Patra told PTI. *—PTI*

The proposed amendments to the Bill have not taken into consideration the Constitutional protection given to minorities and are bound to severely harm the interests of the Muslim community. The stipulation that only individuals who practiced Islam for at least five years only can donate properties to Waqf will prevent non-Muslims from donating properties to Waqf, which will hinder the syncretic culture of the country.

-MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

Security tightened in UP's Muzaffarnagar during Waqf Bill in LS

Security was tightened at sensitive locations of Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar as a precautionary measure, following the tabling of the Waqf Bill in Parliament on Wednesday, officials said. A flag march led by District Magistrate Umesh Mishra and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Abhishek Singh was conducted by the district administration in sensitive areas. The march covered key areas, including the Khalapar locality, they said. Drone surveillance is also being carried out to monitor the situation. Authorities said the situation in Muzaffarnagar has been peaceful so far. *—PTI*

TN Assembly passes resolution seeking Katchatheevu's retrieval

CHENNAI, 2 APRIL

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to retrieve Katchatheevu islet, ceded to Sri Lanka, as a permanent solution to protect the fishing rights of the state's fishermen.

Moving the resolution, Chief Minister MK Stalin said that few political parties have been spreading a false information campaign stating the state government had ceded Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

Former chief ministers, M Karunanidhi and J Jayalalithaa had also opposed ceding Katchatheevu.

Stalin said on an average, two fishermen were being arrested daily by the Sri Lankan navy. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had said in the Rajya Sabha on 27 March that 97 Indian fishermen were in Lankan prison.

A policy note on fisheries department tabled in the Assembly said from 2021 to 2025, 1,383 fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy,

"Decisive efforts taken by this government have led to release and repatriation of 1,287 fishermen. Continuous efforts are being taken to release and repatriate the remaining 96 fishermen and 229 fishing boats," it said.

"The House unanimously urges the Union Government to immediately review the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement and take all steps to retrieve Katchatheevu island; and urges Prime Minister of India, to hold talks with the Sri Lankan Government to get all our imprisoned fishermen released," it added. *—PTI*

The Tamil Nadu Assembly urged the Union Government to take all steps to retrieve the Katchatheevu island *PHOTO: ANI*

Why is Katchatheevu important

Chennai, 2 April

The 1.15-square-kilometre uninhabited island is located in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka. Indian civilians are reportedly allowed onto the island, which is controlled by Sri Lanka, for just two days and a night every year during the festival at St Antony's shrine, the only structure on the island. Katchatheevu was ceded to Sri Lanka as part of bilateral agreements in the 1970s under then Prime Ministership Indira Gandhi. It had served as a traditional fishing ground for fishermen from both India and Sri Lanka. There is also a possibility that the Chinese government could gain a foothold closer to India through the isle. *—Agencies*

Kerala HC grants bail to 10 PFI members in RSS leader's murder

KOCHI, 2 APRIL

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday granted bail to ten accused PFI members in the 2022 murder case of RSS leader SK Srinivasan in Palakkad district.

A bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan and P V Balakrishnan granted the relief to Shefeek, Jafar B, Nassar, Jamsheer H, Abdul Basith, Muhammed Shefeek K, Ashraf K, Jishad B, Ashraf Moulavi and Sirajudheen.

While Shefeek and Jaffar B were granted bail as written grounds of arrest were not furnished to them, the other eight got relief for being in judicial custody for over two years. The Supreme Court has restrained the NIA special court from framing charges in the case.

The High Court said that the apex court's 6 May, 2024 order staying framing of charges in the case was still in effect and therefore, there was possibility of the trial being delayed.

There was no direct evidence to indicate that they had conspired to overthrow the democracy in India to implement Islamic rule, as was alleged. It granted bail to all accused subject to each of them executing a bond of Rs one lakh with two solvent sureties each for the sum to the special court's satisfaction. The High Court had last year granted bail to 17 others accused in the case.

Srinivasan was attacked by a six-member gang at Melamuri in Palakkad on 16 April, 2022. *—PTI*

Maharashtra police issue 3rd summons to Kamra

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

Mumbai police issued a third summons to stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra asking him to appear on 5 April in a case registered against him for allegedly making derogatory remarks about Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, officials said.

The summons was issued on Tuesday and Kamra (36) was asked to appear at the Khar police station where a First Information Report (FIR) was registered against him last month, they said. He had been summoned twice by the police earlier but failed to join the investigation, the officials said.

Meanwhile, Kamra has apologised for the "inconvenience" caused to fans.

"I am deeply sorry for the inconvenience that attending my show has caused to you," Kamra wrote on X, sharing a news report which stated that a Navi Mumbai banker who attended the show had to cut short a trip after police served him notice. "Please email me so that I can schedule your next vacation anywhere you'd like in India," Kamra quipped in the post.

A summons was sent to the banker, who had booked a ticket for Kamra's show through the BookMyShow app, on his mobile phone on 29 March, a senior police official said. The banker was asked to be present as the police wanted to record statements of witnesses, the official added.

On Monday, a Khar police team had visited Kamra's house in Mumbai's Mahim area, where his family lives, to find out whether he would appear before the police, officials said. *—PTI*

Kunal Kamra *PHOTO: ANI*

BYE BYE-ELECTIONS?

SC says T'gana CM making a mockery of 10th Schedule

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Wednesday lashed out at Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy saying in the assembly that there would be no bye-elections even if BRS MLAs switched sides.

"Your Chief Minister is making a mockery of the Tenth Schedule," a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih remarked on the statement made allegedly on 26 March.

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution deals with provisions on disqualification on the ground of defection.

The issue cropped up when the bench was hearing the pleas on the alleged delay by the Telangana Assembly Speaker in deciding the petitions seeking disqualification of some BRS MLAs who had defected to the Congress.

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy allegedly said no bye-elections will happen amid Telangana BRS MLAs defecting to Congress *PHOTO: PTI*

Senior advocate CA Sundaram, appearing for BRS, quoted Reddy as saying, "No bye-elections will happen. Even if BRS desires to have one for their seats, there will be none. Even if their members switch sides, there will not be a bye-election".

In a separate matter in August last year, the apex court expressed displeasure over Reddy's comments on the Supreme Court granting bail to rival BRS leader K Kavitha in cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. *—PTI*

Mahatma Gandhi's great granddaughter dies at 92

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, Nilamben Parikh passed away on Tuesday at the age of 92. Nilamben was known for the famous book detailing the complicated relationship between Gandhi and his oldest son and her grandfather, Harilal.

Nilamben spent her entire life working in Dakshinapatha, an organisation she had instituted for upliftment of tribal women by educating them and providing vocational training in pursuit of financial independence, until her retirement three decades ago.

Her son, Dr Sameer Parikh told Indian Express after his mother's death, "My mother did not suffer from any ailments but since the last few days, she had almost given up on meals due to age. She had severe osteoporosis and was gradually sinking. This morning, I decided not to go to my hospital. I sat beside her and held her hand. I gradually felt her pulse diminish and she slowly sank she passed away peacefully and without any suffering or pain."

Remembering Nilamben, her cousin and historian Tushar Gandhi told, "She spent her entire life teaching in tribal areas. Even when she was physically weak, her moral strength shined through her personality." *—Agencies*

Nilamben Parikh *PHOTO: ANI*

- Nilamben spent her entire life working in Dakshinapatha, an organisation she had instituted for upliftment of tribal women

Court rejects Medha Patkar's defamation appeal

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Saket District Court has dismissed social activist Medha Patkar's appeal against her conviction in a defamation case dating back to 2001. Additional Sessions Judge Vishal Singh upheld Patkar's conviction, stating that "the appeal is dismissed and conviction sustained".

Patkar was found guilty of defaming VK Saxena, the current Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. She was sentenced to five months in prison and fined Rs 10 lakh.

The court has ordered Patkar to appear in person for sentencing, although her counsel has requested the possibility of video conferencing.

The court clarified that the sentence may be reduced or maintained, but not increased, as the prosecution did not request enhancement.

The case stems from a 2000 press release issued by Patkar, which allegedly made derogatory remarks against Saxena. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/GOAPOLICE

Use verified AI to generate Ghibli art: Goa cops

PANAJI, 2 APRIL

Goa Police have advised social media users to consider the risk to privacy before uploading personal pictures for generating Ghibli Art through Artificial Intelligence apps. "Joining the AI-generated Ghibli trend is fun, but not all AI apps protect your privacy! Ghibli art is loved for its dreamy charm, but always think before uploading personal photos and use only trusted AI Apps to generate one," the state police said in a post on X on Tuesday. The post also mentioned phone number for reporting cybercrime. OpenAI last week launched ChatGPT's Ghibli-style AI image generator. Since then social media has been flooded with AI-generated portraits in the style of Ghibli legend Hayao Miyazaki. *—PTI*

Prime accused in R'than terror plot held in MP

RATLAM, 2 APRIL

Madhya Pradesh police have arrested Firoz Khan, the prime accused in the 2022 case relating to the seizure of explosives in Rajasthan as part of an alleged terror conspiracy, an official said on Wednesday. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had declared Khan as the "most wanted" in the case with a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head, he said. "Khan, who was on the run in the case for the last three years and evaded arrest despite being under the NIA's lens, was arrested from his sister's house in Ratlam based on a tip-off," Ratlam district's Superintendent of Police (SP) Amit Kumar said. He was taken into custody on Tuesday night, and is being questioned, the official said. *—PTI*

8kg cyst removed from 15-year-old girl's ovary

INDORE, 2 APRIL

Doctors at a government hospital in Madhya Prdesh have given a new lease of life to a 15-year-old girl by removing a cyst weighing about 8kg from her ovary after a complex surgery. Gynecologist Dr Sumitra Yadav of the Government Maharaja Tukojirao Hospital said on Tuesday that the girl was complaining of difficulty in breathing, stomach-ache and other problems. During an examination, a cyst was found in her ovary. A cyst is a closed, sac-like structure that can form anywhere in the body. It is filled with fluid, semi-solid material, or even air. A surgery was performed on 28 March. Dr Yadav said a sample of the cyst has been sent for a test to find out whether it was cancerous. *—PTI*

Police arrests prime accused in WB blast

KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

The police on Wednesday arrested the prime accused in the blast that left eight people dead at Pathar Pratima in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, a senior officer said. The prime accused, Chandrakanta Banik, is the owner of the firecrackers manufacturing unit situated a few metres away from the house where the explosion took place late Monday night. "We have arrested the prime accused Chandrakanta Banik in connection with the blast," Sunderban Police District SP Koteswara Rao told PTI. This is the first arrested in this connection, while the police are looking for Banik's brother who is absconding. "Forensic experts are examining whether the raw materials (for making firecrackers) were stacked inside the house where the blast took place," another police officer said. *—PTI*

HC stays clearing of 400 acres of 'forest' land

Stay to last only for a day; Police lathicharges students; Centre seeks report

HYDERABAD, 2 APRIL

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state government to suspend all work on the 400-acre land parcel adjacent to the University of Hyderabad (UoH), which has become a bone of contention, for a day—until 3 April.

The decision came after police lathicharged protesting UoH students.

A bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Renuka Yara was hearing a batch of PILs seeking a directive from the court to stop the uprooting of trees and land clearing at the Kancha Gachibowli site.

The petitioners also challenged the state government's decision to allot the land to the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC), claiming it violated the Forest Conservation Act. S Niranjan Reddy, who was making the plea, informed the court that no tree above one meter in height should be cut without prior permission from authorised agencies under the Water, Land, and Trees Act (WALTA).

Calling the situation an "ecological disaster," the petitioner's counsel urged the court to direct the government to produce NRSA images from the past month to demonstrate the "indiscriminate" destruction of the area.

Meanwhile, the UoH Teachers Association led a rally from Ambedkar auditorium to East Campus in solidarity with the agitating students.

According to students, the police barricaded the entire East Campus area while heavy machinery was deployed to clear the site.

The University of Hyderabad Students' Union and other unions and parties aligned with it have launched an indefinite protest and announced boycott of classes from 1 April, demanding the removal of police personnel and earth-moving machinery from the campus.

Meanwhile, the Union Environment Ministry on Wednesday wrote to the Telangana government, seeking a factual report on the state's "illegal clearing of vegetation".

"There have been various news reports alleging damage to the wildlife found in the land, its lakes and the unique rock formations in the area," the ministry said in a letter *—ANI/PTI*

Students of the University of Hyderabad raise slogans during their protest demanding the removal of police personnel and earth-moving machinery from the campus, in Hyderabad on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

THE FOREST IS HOME TO:

700 Species of flowering plants.

10 Species of mammals.

15 Species of reptiles.

200 Species of birds.

400 acres of 'forest' land bordering the University of Hyderabad (UoH) has become the ground for a massive political row. Here's a brief history:

WHAT IS THE CONTROVERSY?

The Telangana government wants to 'develop' 400 acres of 'forested' land in Kancha Gachibowli into an IT park. The government began clearing the area on Friday midnight with bulldozers. Students and faculty protested, claiming ownership of the land, highlighting its biodiversity and noting that it is an ecologically sensitive zone.

WHO DOES THE LAND BELONG TO?

- UoH says 400 acres of land is part of the 2,324 acres allotted to it in 1975.
- The government claims that in 2004, the unified Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana led by Chief Minister N Chadrababu Naidu allotted the land to a private company. The Telangana government thereby acquired the land once the 21-year lease expired.
- The government claims a survey showed that not even an inch of the land belongs to the University while UoH said that no survey was ever conducted to demarcate the territory.
- The High Court ruled in 2022 that there was no legal document proving the transfer of this land to UoH. The Supreme Court later upheld this decision.
- Activists demand that the land is declared as a national park and granted a 'deemed forest' status.

HC upholds acquittal to 6 Gujarat riots accused

AHMEDABAD, 2 APRIL

The Gujarat High Court last month upheld a sessions court's acquittal of six men in the killing of three British nationals during the 2002 riots in Gujarat that broke out after the Godhra train burning incident.

The HC considered the testimonies of witnesses and the investigating officer, and observed that it did not find any reason to interfere with the judgment and order of acquittal passed by the Principal District and Sessions Judge at Sabarkantha at Himmatnagar on February 27, 2015.

PHOTO: ANI

The high court said the sessions court had considered the evidence and the First Information Report (FIR) before accepting the defence's argument that the description of the accused given by the witness was only about the height, clothes and approximate age.

"Even in the FIR itself, no description of the accused was given. Therefore, the sessions court has rightly concluded that such an identification cannot be the sole ground to base conviction upon," the high court said.

The conclusion of the FSL (forensic science laboratory) report on each of the accused exonerates them from being the suspects. Also, the launch of investigation was based on an anonymous fax message and not on the basis of the evidence of any independent eyewitness, it said while dismissing the appeal against acquittal by the sessions court at Himmatnagar in Sabarkantha district. *—PTI*

Lawyers to boycott Justice Sharma's transfer to Cal HC

KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

Expressing anguish at the transfer of Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma from the Delhi High Court to the Calcutta High Court, lawyers' bodies here have informed the Chief Justice that they would boycott the swearing-in ceremony of the judge as well as his court.

Justice Sharma was transferred on Tuesday.

The Bar Association, the Bar Library Club and the Incorporated Law Society urged the Calcutta Chief Justice not to assign any judicial work to Justice Sharma, whose transfer was notified by the Centre on a recommendation by the Collegium of the Supreme Court.

Dinesh Kumar Sharma *PHOTO: X*

"In the event, any determination is assigned to the Learned Judge, there is a possibility that our members may not appear before the Learned Judge," they said.

Expressing reservation, they said, "While we are conscious of regular transfers in usual course of administration, we have reasons to believe that this transfer does not fall in that category." *—PTI*

India, Nepal ink 10 MoUs worth ₹3.9cr

KATHMANDU, 2 APRIL

India and Nepal have signed 10 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for high-impact community development projects in the Himalayan nation to be funded by Indian assistance amounting to NRs 625 million, according to an official release.

The agreements were signed on Tuesday for development in the education, health, and culture sectors, the Indian embassy here said.

"These High Impact Community Development Projects are being built with (the) Government of India's financial assistance at a total cost of NRs 625 million in Education, Health and Culture Sectors under 'Nepal-India Development Cooperation'," the embassy posted on X.

It added that implementing these projects will "help provide better educational, healthcare and cultural facilities to the people of Nepal."

The projects undertaken include the construction of three schools, one monastery, one e-library and two health post buildings.

With this, India has taken up over 573 HICDPs in Nepal since 2003, of which 495 projects have been completed. These are part of Indian government's "continued support" in bolstering the efforts of Nepal in the "growth and development". *—PTI*

Journalist killed in Andaman, 4 arrested

PORT BLAIR, 2 APRIL

The charred body of a 38-year-old journalist missing since 29 March was found in a field in North Andaman district, police said on Wednesday.

The body of Shahdeb Dey, the owner of Republic Andaman news channel, was found in an agricultural field in Deshbandu Nagar, Diglipur, on Tuesday, police said.

North and Middle Andaman Superintendent of Police Shweta K Sugathan said, "It is a murder case and we have picked up four people, including a woman. The preliminary probe revealed that it was committed over personal enmity involving the woman."

The SP said those arrested were identified as Gangaiyya who runs a bar cum restaurant in Diglipur, his employees Rama Subramanian and Ramesh and Bitika Mallik, a local woman. "We are trying to get more details on the exact motive behind the murder," she said.

Shahdeb Dey *PHOTO: X*

"The arrested persons reveald during interrogation that on 29 March, around 8 pm, Bitika called Shahdeb to meet her at Nehru Yuva Kendra in Diglipur. When Shahdeb reached there, Subramanian, who was with Bitika, hit him with a blunt object and he collapsed. They took the body to a secluded place at Deshbandhu Nagar and set it on fire," Sugathan said. *—PTI*

The Navy seized 2,386 kg of hashish, 121 kg of heroin among other drugs *PHOTO: X/@INDIANNAVY*

Navy seizes 2,500 kg drugs from dhow

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Indian Navy's frontline frigate INS Tarkash has seized over 2,500 kg narcotic substances in the Western Indian Ocean, officials said on Wednesday.

The operation was launched after the Navy received inputs on 31 March on suspicious movements of some vessels, they said.

After screening suspicious vessels in the vicinity, INS Tarkash intercepted and boarded a suspect dhow, with the help of coordinated efforts by the P8I marine surveillance aircraft and the Maritime Operations Centre in Mumbai, a Navy spokesperson said.

The ship also launched its integral helicopter for surveillance of the suspicious vessel and identify other vessels likely operating in the area, he said.

A team conducted a thorough search of the suspect vessel and found over 2,500 kg of narcotic substances, including 2,386 kg of hashish and 121 kg of heroin, stored in different cargo holds and compartments onboard the vessel, the Navy spokesperson said.

The suspicious dhow was subsequently brought under the control of INS Tarkash and the crew was grilled to learn about their modus operandi and the presence of other similar vessels in the area, he said. *—PTI*

KAZHAKAM EMPLOYEE

Kerala temple staff quits over alleged casteism

THRISSUR, 2 APRIL

A 'kazhakam' employee of the famed Koodalmanikyam temple resigned over alleged caste discrimination. Balu, who was recruited for 'kazhakam' duties by the state-run Devaswom Recruitment Board, submitted his resignation to the Devaswom administrator on Tuesday evening, sources said.

'Kazhakam' refers to a group within the temple hierarchy tasked with preparing garlands and other chores.

Balu, from the Ezhava community, recently assumed 'Kazhakam' duties, but the 'tantris' (chief priests) lodged a complaint with the Devaswom Board, stating that they would refrain from performing their responsibilities if he was allowed to work.

Balu's resignation once again raised the issue of caste discrimination in temples.

Reacting to the development, Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan said, "The government wants him to continue. We have already informed Balu that the government will provide him necessary support but he tendered his resignation on Tuesday," he said.

According to the minister, Balu had expressed his willingness to continue if he was shifted to a clerical post.

KB Mohandas, Chairman, Devaswom Recruitment Board, slammed the stand adopted by the 'tantries' on the issue and said it was not befitting of a civilized society.

Following this, the board authorities temporarily reassigned Balu to office duties.

However, the state government had objected to this and made it clear that according to existing Acts and Regulations, a person from a backward caste must be allowed to work at the temple.

The ancient temple in Irinjalakuda is one of the few temples in Kerala dedicated to Bharata, the third brother of Lord Rama. *—PTI*

After Balu, from the Ezhava community, assumed Kazhakam duties, the chief priests said they would not work if he was there *PHOTO: ANI*

Rescue operation underway after a massive blaze triggered by a blast raged through a firecracker warehouse, in Gujarat's Banaskantha *PHOTO: PTI*

Aluminium powder caused Gujarat explosion that killed 21

DEESA, 2 APRIL

A forensic investigation confirmed that the presence of aluminium powder, one of the ingredients to make firecrackers, caused the huge explosion at the warehouse near Deesa town in Gujarat killing 21 persons on Tuesday, police said on Wednesday.

Apart from aluminium powder, a team from the forensic science laboratory (FSL) also found yellow dextrin powder from the warehouse where firecrackers were stored, Banaskantha district Superintendent of Police Akshayraj Makwana told reporters.

"Both materials are used in making firecrackers. The aluminium powder was the reason behind the explosion," Makwana said. *—PTI*

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

MI5's oldest secret spy tools are now the star of attraction at the London exhibition. (Clockwise from top left) A desiccated 110-year-old lemon that played a key role in espionage history. The lemon, now black and shriveled, had been used to write invisible-ink letters detailing British troop movements. A tin of talcum powder was found to contain damning proof of espionage. And the first ever spy camera purchased by MI5 ***PHOTO: AP***

Trump's 'reciprocal' tariffs a risky move for economy

After weeks of White House hype and public anxiety, President Donald Trump is set Wednesday to announce a barrage of self-described "reciprocal" tariffs on friend and foe alike.

The new tariffs — coming on what Trump has called "Liberation Day" — is a bid to boost US manufacturing and punish other countries for what he has said are years of unfair trade practices. But by most economists' assessments, the risky move threatens to plunge the economy into a downturn and mangle decades-old alliances.

The White House is exuding confidence despite the political and financial gamble being undertaken. "2 April, 2025, will go down as one of the most important days in modern American history," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at Tuesday's briefing while adding that the new tariffs will take effect immediately.

The reciprocal tariffs Trump plans to announce follow similar recent announcements of 25 per cent taxes on auto imports; levies against China, Canada and Mexico; and expanded tariffs on steel and aluminum. Trump has also put tariffs against countries that import oil from Venezuela and plans separate import taxes on pharmaceutical drugs, lumber, copper and computer chips.

None of the warning signs about a falling stock market or consumer sentiment turning morose have caused the administration to publicly second-guess its strategy. White House trade adviser Peter Navarro has suggested that the new tariffs would raise USD 600 billion annually, which would be the largest tax increase since World War II.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told lawmakers that the tariffs would be capped and could be negotiated downward by other countries, according to the office of Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla. But the White House has yet to confirm policy details, despite Trump saying on Monday that he had made his decision.

President Donald Trump listens to a question from a reporter before signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Monda ***PHOTO: PTI***

Importers would likely pass along some of the cost of the taxes on to consumers. The Budget Lab at Yale University estimates that a 20 per cent universal tariff would cost the average household an additional USD 3,400 to USD 4,200. The administration's premise is that manufacturers will quickly increase domestic production and create new factory jobs — and the White House is expressing confidence that Trump's approach is absolutely correct.

The bold optimism has done little to reassure the public or allies who see the import taxes as a threat. Based on the possibility of broad 20 per cent tariffs that have been floated by some White House aides, most analyses see an economy tarnished by higher prices and stagnation. US economic growth — as measured by gross domestic product — would be roughly a percentage point lower, and clothing, oil, automobiles, housing, groceries and even insurance would cost more, the Budget Lab analysis found.

Trump would single-handedly be applying these tariffs, since he has ways of legally doing so without congressional approval. That makes it easy for Democratic lawmakers and policymakers to criticize the Republican administration.

Heather Boushey, who served as a member of the Biden White House's Council of Economic Advisers, noted that the less aggressive tariffs Trump imposed during his first term failed to stir the manufacturing renaissance he promised voters.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the tariffs were fundamentally a way for Trump to raise revenues in order to pay for his planned extensions of income tax cuts that disproportionately favour millionaires and billionaires. Even Republicans who trust Trump's instincts have acknowledged that the tariffs could be disruptive to an economy with an otherwise healthy 4.1 per cent unemployment rate.

"We'll see how it all develops," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La. "It may be rocky in the beginning. But I think that this will make sense for Americans and help all Americans."

Longtime trading partners are preparing their own countermeasures.

Many allies feel they have been reluctantly drawn into a confrontation by Trump, who routinely says that friends and foes have essentially ripped off the United States with a mix of tariffs and other trade barriers.

Because Trump has hyped his tariffs without providing specifics, he has provided a deeper sense of uncertainty for the world, a sign that the economic slowdown could possibly extend beyond US borders to other nations that would see one person to blame. *—PTI*

SALAR

Ukraine's women take tough jobs as men go to war

Kateryna Koliadiuk was curious. The 19-year-old Ukrainian agronomy student spotted an ad seeking women to enroll in a tractor driving course and decided to try.

But the industrial vehicle was huge and complex, and she wasn't sure she could operate it.

"In the beginning I was so scared. In the beginning I couldn't do this," she said. She now drives with authority, her manicured fingers resting at the wheel.

From driving tractors to working in coal mines, Ukrainian women are taking jobs once reserved for men, who are being drafted to the front lines in the war with Russia. Women have also signed up to join the armed forces at a higher rate.

Koliadiuk said her family was shocked. "We were told that women should be in the kitchen, at home with children. That is why to go and study such equipment was so scary," she said. "But then we took care of ourselves."

It's part of a crucial government effort to grow an economy devastated by three years of war and address labour shortages created by the mobilisation, according to the economy ministry, which leads training programmes in construction, agriculture and transport geared toward women.

"Ukrainian women are under a lot of pressure because their men are on the front line," Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said in an interview with

The Associated Press. "When the man is mobilized, the woman is mobilised with him as well."

Businesses want to hire again after the initial economic shock of Russia's full-scale invasion, but the labour force has shrunk.

About 5 million Ukrainians left the country and are abroad, the minister said, and another million are serving in the armed forces.

That's a lot considering about 9 million Ukrainians are currently employed, she added.

Svyrydenko is Ukraine's first female economy minister and a symbol of the rise of women in the labour force because of the war.

Before, women were mostly employed in education and health care, social protection and government service, she said.

Now there's demand in the industrial and military areas.

"It is the mindset of both women and employers that is changing," she said.

"Employers are ready to take women on the job more often, and women are ready to diversify their skills."

In coal mines in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, women are now hired to operate machinery to keep production going.

There and elsewhere, men still dominate jobs that require heavy physical labour.

Former accountant Iryna Ostanko, 37, was looking for a new job and decided to become an elevator operator at a mine in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

She was inspired by her husband, who has worked at the mine for 15 years. He supported her decision.

"Before, in this place underground, there were no women at all," she said.

"Women appeared here after the start of the full-scale invasion when a lot of men left to defend our country."

Ostanko had never descended to the mine's depths of 260m.

Her training involved one month of theory and another of hands-on training.

"War is making changes, always making changes," said Viktor Kuznetsov, the mine's head engineer.

He said the lack of qualified personnel is the main challenge, as many male workers left to join the fight.

He has hired over 100 women since Russia's full-scale invasion, a drastic change.

Without them, the mine could not function, he said.

In Kyiv region, Yulia Skitchko watched new female trainees operate excavators, her high-heeled black leather boots caked in mud.

She is the head of Alef Stroy, a construction machinery rental service.

For years, she had dreamed of hiring more women.

The war gave her that chance, and US funding gave her the ability to train female hires. They have trained 45 women so far.

"We were told that we are crazy people, this is not possible. Women? Excavator? They will never do this," she said.

"These days, our first women who graduated from this course already have jobs and started working on building construction sites."

Modern building equipment is easier to operate, she said, and the idea that women can't do it is a gender stereotype.

"This war has changed our women mentally, and they want to contribute to Ukraine's rebuilding," Skitchko said.

"We need to give them an opportunity to learn." *—PTI*

Women have also signed up to join the armed forces at a higher rate ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Lancet warns India as it refuses to link air pollution to deaths

Studies and scientific evidence have proven that there is a direct link between air pollution and adverse health outcomes during peak air pollution days and increased incidents of acute respiratory disease in India, a top Lancet Countdown official has said.

The statement by Executive Director at Lancet Countdown, Marina Belen Romanello, cames as a report by the Indian government stating that there is "no direct correlation between air pollution and mortality" was discussed on the sidelines of a recently concluded World Health Organisation (WHO) conference in Colombia.

The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change is a multidisciplinary collaboration monitoring the evolving health profile of changing climate.

Speaking to PTI, Romanello highlighted the long-term health impacts of air pollution, including lung cancer, an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, and stroke, among others.

"There is very definite evidence on how harmful air pollution is for people's health at all ages throughout their life course. That is why it is so important that governments acknowledge the science and clean the air, because that will result in a healthier and more productive population," Romanello said.

In July 2024, India's Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel told the Rajya Sabha that there is "no conclusive data available in the country to establish a direct correlation of death/disease exclusively due to air pollution."

"Air pollution is one of the many factors affecting respiratory ailments and associated diseases. Health is impacted by a number of factors, including food habits, occupational habits, socio-economic status, medical history, immunity, heredity, etc., of individuals, apart from the environment," the reply read.

Stressing that "there is no safe level of air pollution," Romanello further stated that "all exposure to air pollution, regardless of the concentration, will enter our lungs and damage our health, blood system, and internal organs."

"So, it is having a direct impact on the health of local population and also on the economy and labour productivity. The damage it can do to a country is quite widespread," Romanello told PTI.

In her reply, Patel also mentioned that the government of India has taken "several steps to address the air pollution issue" and that the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) aims to safeguard the health of women and children by providing them with clean LPG. However, a think tank report published in 2024 revealed 41 per cent of the Indian population still relies on wood, cow dung, or other biomass as cooking fuel.

Air pollution causes long-term health impacts including lung cancer, an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, and stroke, among others ***PHOTO: PTI***

This practice cumulatively emits around 340 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the environment annually, accounting for approximately 13 per cent of India's greenhouse gas emissions, it said. According to the WHO, around 47 million health workers and advocates are calling for cleaner air to curb pollution-related deaths.

Over 50 countries, cities, and organisations pledged new commitments at the WHO's second conference in the last week of March on air pollution and health in Cartagena to tackle air pollution, protect public health, and help halve its deadly impacts by 2040.

The goal is backed by a petition from 47 million health professionals, patients, and advocates demanding that clean air be made a public health priority, according to the WHO. Speaking at the plenary session of the recently concluded WHO conference, its Director Dr Maria Neira reiterated that air pollution is a leading risk factor for both mortality and morbidity worldwide.

She said that it disproportionately harms low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) and that 90 per cent of air pollution-related deaths occur in these countries.

A previously published WHO report presented by Dr Neira at the session stated that air pollution impacts multiple organs, including the brain, lungs, heart, skin, pancreas, bones, liver, kidneys, blood vessels, and the reproductive system.

Some of the diseases associated with air pollution include lung cancer, pneumonia, decreased lung function or growth, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, poor bone metabolism, liver and digestive tract cancer, high blood pressure, systemic inflammation, neurodegenerative diseases, myocardial infarction, arrhythmia, congestive heart failure, and premature birth, among others.

Reacting to the issue being discussed on a global platform, Indian parliamentarian and Deputy Leader of the Indian National Congress in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, said that the Ministry of Health should evolve parameters to record air pollution as a significant contributing factor to death.

The Union Health and Environment Ministries' persistent denial of a direct correlation between air pollution and mortality clearly contradicts their own internal findings, one of the keynote speakers at WHO conference last week and founder of Warrior Moms movement group, Bhavreen Kandhari, said.

She stated that despite substantial evidence from studies such as the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) 2019 report attributing 1.7 million deaths to air pollution, the government's public stance remains dismissive.

"Such parallels highlight a troubling pattern of inaction and denial that continues to compromise the well-being of citizens," she added.

The WHO, at the recent conference in Colombia, highlighted that air pollution causes nearly seven million deaths annually, urging countries and global leaders to take action for clean air. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Pak Prez Zardari hospitalised with fever, infection

KARACHI, 2 APRIL

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari was admitted to a private hospital in Karachi after his health deteriorated, a media report said. Zardari, 69, was brought to the hospital from Nawabshah following complaints of fever and an infection, The Express Tribune reported on Tuesday. Zardari underwent several medical tests, and doctors are closely monitoring his condition, it said. He had gone to Nawabshah to offer Eid prayers on Monday and before that held a meeting with his party leaders on Sunday, said the report. Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), the state-run news agency, said on Tuesday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inquired about President Zardari's health on telephone and prayed for an early recovery for him. *—PTI*

Italy's trade union joins trial in Indian worker's death

ROME, 2 APRIL

Italy's main trade union confederation on Tuesday said it was joining the prosecution of a farm owner charged with the murder of an Indian migrant worker who bled to death after his arm was cut off by a piece of equipment. Antonello Lovato, 39, has been accused of abandoning the bleeding Satnam Singh, 31, and failing to call an ambulance following the incident in Latina, a largely agricultural province south of Rome, on 17 June, 2024. Prosecutors considered charging Lovato with manslaughter, but raised it to murder with malice after the fact since he was aware the actions could cause death. Lovato said that "he lost his head," when he saw Singh, who was working in the country illegally, bleeding. *—PTI*

China conducts drills focusing on Taiwan Strait

TAIPEI, 2 APRIL

China on Wednesday continued military exercises around Taiwan, focusing on the Taiwan Strait, a vital international trade route. The "Strait Thunder-2025A" drills targeted the middle and southern sections of the strait, testing the People's Liberation Army's capabilities in area regulation, joint blockades and precision strikes, said a PLA spokesperson. Taiwan closely monitored the drills but reported no unusual activity on the island. Over the past 24 hours, Taiwan's Defence Ministry noted 76 Chinese aircraft and 19 ships entering its air and maritime zones, including 37 planes crossing the unofficial centre line of the Taiwan Strait. China's Shandong aircraft carrier group also entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone. *—PTI*

Algeria shoots down drone near Mali border

BAMAKO, 2 APRIL

Algeria announced on Tuesday that it shot down a military drone near its border with Mali, marking a significant escalation in tensions between the two countries. The Algerian army stated that the armed drone entered its airspace on Monday near Tin Zaouatine, a border town used by Tuareg separatists. Mali's army confirmed the drone crash but did not confirm whether Algeria had shot it down. Rida Lyammouri, a Sahel expert, said the downing of the drone, rather than a warning, highlights Algeria's growing frustration and zero-tolerance stance towards Mali's military activities in its airspace. The incident comes amid escalating tensions between the two nations, which have strained relations since a military junta took power in Mali in 2020. *—PTI*

LIBERAL WINS WINCONSIN SC RACE

Dane County judge Crawford's victory maintains 4–3 liberal balance in top court

MADISON, 2 APRIL

Susan Crawford, a Dane County judge, defeated Republican-backed Brad Schimel in a record-breaking Wisconsin Supreme Court election on Tuesday, securing majority for at least three more years.

Crawford's victory maintains the 4–3 liberal balance in the court, which has held since 2023.

Schimel, a former state attorney general endorsed by President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk, was heavily supported by Republican groups, including Musk's funded organisations, which poured over USD 21 million into the race. Crawford, supported by Democrats including Barack Obama and George Soros, highlighted Schimel's opposition to abortion rights and his ties to Musk during the campaign.

The race became a proxy battle for national political battles, with Musk campaigning for Schimel and Trump Jr urging support for the Republican candidate. Crawford, who ran on protecting abortion rights and union power, benefitted from substantial campaign contributions and visits by key Democrats, including Minnesota Gov Tim Walz.

The race, the most expensive court election in US history, saw record-high turnout, with early voting up more than 50 per cent from 2023. Crawford will serve a 10-year term, replacing retiring liberal Justice Ann Walsh Bradley. The court's future decisions on abortion, voting rules, and district boundaries remain crucial in Wisconsin's politically pivotal status.

Meanwhile, Republicans Jimmy Patronis and Randy Fine won special elections Tuesday in two Florida congressional districts, bolstered by Trump's endorsement to fill vacant seats in reliably Republican strongholds.

Patronis, the state's chief financial officer, fended off a challenge from Democrat Gay Valimont even though she far outraised and outspent him. He will fill the northwest Florida 1st District seat vacated by former Rep. Matt Gaetz, who was chosen to be Trump's attorney general but withdrew from consideration amid allegations of sexual misconduct, which he has denied.

In north Florida's 6th District, Fine won against challenger Josh Weil for a seat vacated by Mike Waltz when he was tapped to become Trump's national security adviser. *—PTI*

Dane County judge Susan Crawford PHOTO: X

US Navy drops 400 books on 'diversity, equity and inclusion'

WASHINGTON, 2 APRIL

The US Naval Academy has removed nearly 400 books from its library after being told by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office to review and get rid of ones that promote diversity, equity and inclusion, US officials said Tuesday.

Academy officials were told to review the library late last week, and an initial search had identified about 900 books for a closer look. They decided on nearly 400 to remove and began doing so Monday, finishing before Hegseth arrived for a visit Tuesday that had already been planned and was not connected to the library purge, officials said. A list of the books has not yet been made available.

Pulling the books off the Naval Academy shelves is another step in the Trump administration's far-reaching effort to eliminate so-called DEI content from federal agencies, including policies, programs, online and social media postings and curriculum at schools.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said late Tuesday, "All service academies are fully committed to executing and implementing President Trump's Executive Orders."

A US official said the academy was told late last week to conduct the review and removal.

It isn't clear if the order was directed by Hegseth or someone else on his staff. *—PTI*

US JUDGE ORDERS TRUMP TO RESTORE AID TO MIGRANT CHILDREN

SAN FRANCISCO, 2 APRIL

A California-based federal judge has ruled that the Trump administration must temporarily reinstate legal aid for thousands of unaccompanied migrant children in the US. The administration had terminated a contract with the Acacia Center for Justice, which provided legal services to these children, on 21 March. The judge's decision, effective until 16 April, is a significant blow to the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. The administration had argued that taxpayers were not obligated to fund direct legal aid for migrant children. *—PTI*

DEMOCRAT BOOKER SETS RECORD WITH 25-HOUR SPEECH ON SENATE FLOOR

WASHINGTON, 2 APRIL

In a feat of determination, New Jersey Democratic Senator Cory Booker held the Senate floor with a marathon speech that lasted all night and into Tuesday evening, setting a historic mark to show Democrats' resistance to President Donald Trump's sweeping actions. Booker took to the Senate floor on Monday evening, saying he would remain there as long as he was "physically able" and continued for more than 25 hours before he walked off the floor. The speech set the record for the longest continuous Senate floor speech in the chamber's history. *—PTI*

CALIFORNIA REJECTS BILLS TO BAN TRANGENDERS IN GIRLS SPORTS

SACRAMENTO, 2 APRIL

California lawmakers have rejected two proposals aimed at banning transgender athletes from participating in girls' sports. The bills, introduced by Republican lawmakers, were met with opposition from Democratic lawmakers, LGBTQ+ advocates, and parents of transgender children. One bill would have banned student's assigned male at birth from participating on girls' sports teams. The other would have reversed a 2013 law allowing students to participate in sex-segregated school programs and use facilities aligning with their gender identity. *—PTI*

Myanmar quake victim rescued after five days

BANGKOK, 2 APRIL

Rescue crews in Myanmar pulled 26-year-old Naing Lin Tun from the rubble of a hotel in Naypyitaw early on Wednesday, five days after a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck the country. Using an endoscopic camera to pinpoint his location, the rescue team confirmed he was alive before carefully extricating him through a hole in the debris. Though weak and covered in dust, Naing Lin Tun was conscious and received medical treatment on-site.

The earthquake, which hit on Friday, has claimed at least 2,719 lives and left over 4,500 injured. Reports suggest the true toll may be much higher. In neighbouring Thailand, the collapse of a high-rise construction site in Bangkok killed 22 people and injured 34.

Myanmar, already devastated by civil war, faces an escalating humanitarian crisis. Over 3 million people are displaced, with nearly 20 million in urgent need of aid, according to the UN. International aid has poured in, with Australia contributing an additional $4.5 million, India sending supplies and rescue workers, and teams from China, Russia, and the UAE joining efforts.

The earthquake also severely affected communication and infrastructure, with many areas cut off from the outside world. Local reports continue to emerge from affected regions, including Mandalay, where 27 miners were killed in a cave-in. *—PTI*

A man being rescued on Wednesday after remaining trapped for five days under debris of the collapsed Hotel Aye Chan Thar in Naypyitaw's Ottarathiri Township PHOTO: X

Over 30 killed as Israel pounds Gaza

People mourn a Palestinian who was killed in an Israeli strike on Gaza Strip at Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah (L) and the crowd at the funeral of eight Red Crescent emergency responders in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, whose bodies were recovered in Rafah a week after an Israeli attack PHOTO: PTI

JERUSALEM, 2 APRIL

Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defence minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 30 people, nearly a dozen of them children.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement.

The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023. Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2M people.

Katz didn't specify which areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas. His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages." The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

"This is the only way to end the war," Katz said.

The Hostage Families Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defence Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza." *—PTI*

US airstrikes in Yemen kill four

DUBAI, 2 APRIL

Suspected US airstrikes battered rebel-controlled areas of Yemen into Wednesday, with the Houthis saying one strike killed at least four people near the Red Sea port city of Hodeida.

The intense campaign of airstrikes under President Donald Trump, targeting the rebels over their attacks on shipping in Mideast waters stemming from the Israel-Hamas war, has killed at least 65 people, according to casualty figures released by the Houthis.

The campaign appears to show no signs of stopping as the Trump administration again linked their airstrikes on the Iranian-backed Houthis to an effort to pressure Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program. While so far giving no specifics about the campaign and its targets, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt put the overall number of strikes on Tuesday at over 200.

"Iran is incredibly weakened as a result of these attacks and we have seen they have taken out Houthi leaders," Leavitt said. *—PTI*

BATMAN LEAVES

Hollywood star Val Kilmer dies at 65

LOS ANGELES, 2 APRIL

Val Kilmer, the brooding, versatile actor famed for his roles as Iceman in 'Top Gun', Batman in 'Batman Forever', and Jim Morrison in 'The Doors', has died at 65. Kilmer died on Tuesday night in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends, his daughter, Mercedes Kilmer, confirmed. The actor's death was attributed to complications from pneumonia, following his recovery from throat cancer in 2014.

Kilmer's career spanned over three decades, with notable early roles in 'Top Secret!' (1984) and 'Real Genius' (1985). His star shone brightest in the early 1990s, with standout performances in 'Tombstone' (1993), 'True Romance' (1993), and 'Heat' (1995), where he starred alongside Al Pacino and Robert De Niro.

He is perhaps best remembered for his portrayal of the cocky yet charismatic Tom "Iceman" Kazansky in 'Top Gun' (1986). Kilmer initially hesitated to take the role, but it became one of his most iconic. He reprised the role in 'Top Gun: Maverick' (2022).

His time as Batman in 'Batman Forever' (1995) was less well received. Kilmer, frustrated by the restrictive suit, later admitted it hindered his performance, adding that it was isolating and difficult to move in.

Val Kilmer PHOTO: X

Kilmer's dedication to roles was legendary; for 'Tombstone', he famously filled his bed with ice to simulate tuberculosis. He fully immersed himself in portraying Jim Morrison in 'The Doors' (1991), wearing leather pants and only responding to his castmates as the rock icon.

Despite his immense talent, Kilmer was known for his difficult reputation on set, often pushing for creative control and artistic integrity. His roles in films like 'The Island of Dr Moreau' (1996) furthered this perception, with the film becoming notorious for its chaotic production.

Kilmer's early life was marked by tragedy, with his younger brother Wesley dying at 15, an event that deeply affected him throughout his life. In addition to acting, Kilmer was a poet, visual artist, and devout Christian Scientist.

He is survived by his two children, Mercedes and Jack, from his marriage to actress Joanne Whalley. *—PTI*

UK, Mauritius near deal over Chagos sovereignty

LONDON, 2 APRIL

The UK is paying Mauritius to lease back an Island it has lent them for free PHOTO: X

Britain and Mauritius are close to finalising an agreement to transfer sovereignty over the Chagos Islands, including the strategically important Diego Garcia, home to a major US military base. The UK government confirmed Tuesday that the Trump administration has approved the deal, with no further US action required.

Tom Wells, a spokesperson for PM Keir Starmer, said the treaty will soon be signed and laid before Parliament for scrutiny and ratification. The deal would see Britain hand over the Indian Ocean archipelago to Mauritius while leasing back the Diego Garcia base for at least 99 years.

The agreement has faced criticism from the opposition Conservative Party and some US allies, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who warned of national security risks. However, Trump expressed support for the deal during a meeting with Starmer in February.

Mauritius has long contested Britain's claim to the islands, separated in 1965, and the UN has urged their return. A resettlement fund for Chagossian islanders evicted in the 1960s and 70s has been proposed, though details remain unclear. *—PTI*

Gold stays flat at peak level of ₹94,150 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Gold price stayed flat at its all-time high level of Rs 94,150 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday amid concerns over imposition of reciprocal tariffs by the US, according to All India Sarafa Association. On Tuesday, gold of 99.9 per cent purity surged by Rs 2,000, the steepest in nearly two months, hits fresh peak of Rs 94,150 per 10g. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also traded flat at its lifetime peak of Rs 93,700 per 10g. Traders said gold prices remained flat ahead of the US President Donald Trump's anticipated announcement of imposing reciprocal tariffs on various countries, including India, which have a trade deficit with America. Spot gold went up 0.11 per cent to USD 3,116.86 per ounce. Also, Comex gold futures for June delivery traded flat at USD 3,149.30 per ounce ASEAN countries, which may now face increased scrutiny. spot silver rose 0.52 per cent to USD 33.87 per ounces. —*PTI*

Rupee falls 2 paise, closes at 85.52 against USD

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 2 paise lower at 85.52 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as the support from positive domestic markets was negated by uncertainty over trade tariffs. Forex traders said the Indian rupee ended the first trading session of the fiscal year 2025-26 on a flat note over Trump's reciprocal tariffs concerns and foreign fund outflows. A surge in crude oil prices also put pressure on the rupee. However, positive domestic markets and a weak tone in the US dollar cushioned the downside, forex dealers said. The unit ended the session at 85.52 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 2 paise from its previous closing level —*PTI*

E-Marketplace to recruit over 1M staff

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has achieved a significant milestone by facilitating the hiring of over 1 million manpower resources for government organisations in the current fiscal year (2024-25). This digital procurement platform provides government buyers with a seamless solution to hire outsourced resources. With over 33,000 service providers on board, GeM enables buyers to engage manpower based on diverse criteria, including minimum wages and fixed remuneration. Various skilled and unskilled roles, such as security personnel, horticulture staff, and data entry operators, can be hired through the portal. Ajay Bhadoo, CEO of GeM, stated that the platform has emerged as a one-stop-shop for procurement of services required by government buyers. GeM's manpower outsourcing service simplifies the hiring process and ensures strict labour compliance —*ANI*

Digital media earns 32% of media revenue

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Digital media has surpassed traditional media such as television, capturing 32 per cent of India's media revenues of Rs 802 billion in the calendar year 2024, according to a report by Elara Capital. Reason behind the shift is that Indians spend five hours a day, on mobile, which is attracting advertisers to digital mediums. Report added that digital ads are highly effective as 69 per cent of mobile users spend time on entertainment media. Brands are tracking the success of digital ads, as 67 per cent of digital ad revenue from "Search and Social." Increased share of total media revenue is fueled by the growth of OTT platforms, regional market expansion, and connected TV. Advertisers on TV have declined by 2 per cent —*ANI*

Manufacturing sector growth hits 8-month high

PMI indicates improvement in the health of the sector

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

- India's manufacturing sector growth rose to an eight-month high in March, driven by quicker increases in factory orders and production amid buoyant demand conditions, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

India's manufacturing sector growth rose to an eight-month high in March, driven by quicker increases in factory orders and production amid buoyant demand conditions, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 58.1 in March, up from 56.3 in February, indicating a substantial improvement in the health of the sector that was above its long-run average.

In February, India's manufacturing PMI fell to a 14-month low amid softer increase in new orders and production.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Manufacturing sector growth in India recovered the ground lost in February, largely driven by a stronger contribution from its largest sub-component: the New Orders Index.

"March saw total sales expand to the greatest extent since July 2024, with companies remarking on positive customer interest, favourable demand conditions and successful marketing initiatives," the survey noted.

Accordingly, firms scaled up production volumes at the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year. The rate of expansion was sharp, above its historical average and the strongest in eight months.

Although new export orders continued to increase strongly in March, the pace of growth retreated to a three-month low. Panellists cited gains from Asia, Europe and the Middle East in terms of international sales.

Buoyant demand led companies to tap into their inventories to meet increased client appetite, resulting in the most rapid decline in finished goods stocks since January 2022.

The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global. —*PTI*

NIFTY CLIMBS 0.72%

Sensex rebounds by 0.78%, ahead of US tariff notice

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

Stock markets rebounded on Wednesday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by nearly 593 points on strong macro data and value buying in banking and auto shares after recent free fall, even as investors awaited US tariff announcements that are expected later in the day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 592.93 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at 76,617.44. During the day, it surged 655.84 points or 0.86 per cent to 76,680.35.

The NSE Nifty climbed 166.65 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,332.35. Value buying in select auto, banking and IT shares, and India's manufacturing sector growth rising to an eight-month high in March powered the recovery in the domestic stock markets. Sensex had tanked 1,390 points or 1.80 per cent and Nifty plunged by 353 points on Tuesday due to FII selling ahead of US tariff announcements on Wednesday.

From the Sensex pack, Zomato jumped nearly 5 per cent, followed by Titan which climbed almost 4 per cent. IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel and HDFC Bank were also among the gainers. However, Nestle, Power Grid, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.38 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.99 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. —*PTI*

Sebi grants extension to NSDL for IPO till 31 July

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: X

Capital markets regulator Sebi has granted an extension for the listing of National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) shares until 31 July, 2025, the depository announced.

This extension comes after the depository sought an extension from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). Market experts suggest that this extension will give NSDL ample time to ready itself for Initial Public Offering (IPO) and to launch it when market conditions are more favourable.

Sebi granted its go-ahead to NSDL in September 2024 to float its IPO. The proposed IPO will be a complete Offer For Sale (OFS) of over 5.72 crore equity shares by existing shareholders, including the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), State Bank of India (SBI), and HDFC Bank.

NSDL, a Sebi-registered market infrastructure institution, has been a pioneer in India's securities market, offering a wide range of products and services.

It played a crucial role in the dematerialisation of securities in India following the introduction of Depositories Act in 1996.

NSDL is India's first securities depository to reach Rs 500 lakh crore in the value of assets held in custody in September 2024.

This upcoming listing will make NSDL the country's second publicly traded depository after Central Depository Services (CDSL). —*ANI*

RS 1,757.56 CR LOSS

Govt suffers loss as BSNL fails to bill Reliance Jio

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

The government suffered a loss of Rs 1,757.56 crore as state-owned telecom firm BSNL failed to bill Reliance Jio for 10 years since May 2014 as per their agreement on passive infrastructure sharing, Comptroller and Auditor General of India said on Tuesday.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in a statement said that BSNL incurred a loss of Rs 38.36 crore as it failed to deduct the share of licence fee from the revenue share paid to the Telecom Infrastructure Providers. "BSNL failed to enforce the Master Service Agreement with M/s. Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd and did not bill for the additional technology used on BSNL's shared passive infrastructure, resulting in loss of Rs 1,757.76 crore and penal interest thereon, between May 2014 to March 2024 to the government exchequer," CAG said.

CAG also noted that there was a short billing of passive infrastructure sharing charge by BSNL.

"Non-adherence to the terms and conditions laid down in the MSA with RJIL by BSNL and non-application of the escalation clause resulted in a loss of revenue of Rs 29 crore towards infrastructure sharing charges," the statement said. —*PTI*

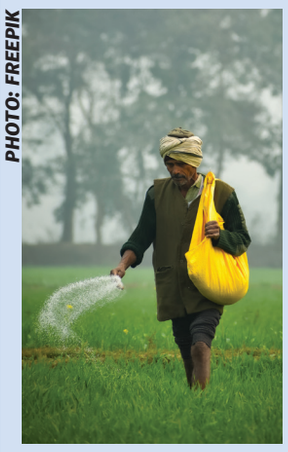


PHOTO: FREEPIK

Fertiliser subsidy hike unlikely to boost company margins

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Indian government's recent decision to increase fertiliser subsidy rates is unlikely to boost the gross margins of fertiliser makers, according to brokerage firm.Anand Rathi. Despite the hike, the firm predicts that gross margins for the first half of 2025-26 will contract to around 32 per cent, down from 35 per cent in the same period last year. The key factors contributing to this projection are the significant increase in global retail market prices and rupee depreciation, which will offset the benefits of the subsidy hike. The government's decision to increase the subsidy rates is aimed at supporting farmers, who have been facing rising costs due to increased global prices.

The Union Cabinet has approved a budgetary requirement of approximately Rs 37,216.15 crore for the Kharif season, which is Rs 13,000 crore more than the budgetary requirement for Rabi seasons 2024-25. Anand Rathi believes that the farming community is unlikely to be materially impacted by higher retail market costs, as the government continues to bear inflated costs through higher subsidies. —*ANI*

High Court imposes fine on Anil Ambani

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

- The Bombay High Court has imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on industrialist Anil Ambani for seeking an urgent hearing of his petition challenging a notice issued to him by the Income Tax department in April 2022, noting it as an "artificial urgency".

The Bombay High Court has imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on industrialist Anil Ambani for seeking an urgent hearing of his petition challenging a notice issued to him by the Income Tax department in April 2022, noting it as an "artificial urgency".

A division bench of Justices MS Sonak and Jitendra Jain remarked that the facility to seek urgent hearing cannot be invoked by creating such artificial urgency.

Besides, the challenge is only to a show cause notice, the bench stated in its 27 March order, a copy of which was made available on Wednesday.

The bench rejected Ambani's application for an urgent hearing of the petition and imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 that will have to be paid to the Tata Memorial Hospital within two weeks.

When the petition came up for hearing in the regular course on Tuesday, Ambani's counsel Rafiq Dada told the bench that on 27 March, the tax department passed its order for the concerned assessment year.

He sought to withdraw the petition and informed the bench that the cost imposed by the bench earlier was deposited.

The bench on Tuesday accepted the statement and disposed of the plea as withdrawn. —*PTI*

Tesla sales drop in first quarter

NEW YORK, 2 APRIL

Tesla sales declined in the first three months of the year, another sign that Elon Musk's once high-flying electric car company is struggling to attract buyers.

The drop of 13 per cent is likely due to combination of factors, including its aging lineup, competition from rivals and a backlash from Musk's embrace of right wing politics. It also is a warning that the company's first-quarter earnings report later this month could disappoint investors. Tesla reported deliveries of 336,681 globally in the January to March quarter.

The figure was down from sales of 387,000 in the same period a year ago.

The decline came despite deep discounts, zero financing and other incentives.

Analysts polled by FactSet expected much higher deliveries of 408,000. —*PTI*

Energy storage big hurdle for net-zero emission

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: X

Achieving net-zero emission norms by 2050 hinges on overcoming the biggest challenge: Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). A report by BofA Global Research highlights the need for a complete transformation of energy systems, shifting away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydro power.

However, solar and wind energy generation are intermittent, relying on sunlight and wind speed. This can destabilise the grid and make it difficult to match electricity demand. To address this, energy storage systems like batteries are crucial for grid stability and enabling the efficient use of renewable energy.

IEA's target of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030 requires energy solutions like BESS to address intermittency. However, securing raw materials like lithium, cobalt, and nickel poses a significant challenge. The EU and US are implementing regulations to promote a circular economy and recover critical materials.

Asia is expected to lead the battery stationary storage capacity, with investments projected to reach up to USD

150 billion

by 2030

battery stationary storage capacity, with investments projected to reach up to USD 150 billion by 2030. The global BESS market is expected to reach at least 520Wh by 2030, growing at a CAGR of above 21% from 2024. —*ANI*

META YET TO RESPOND

Meta's head of AI research to quit after 8 yrs

MENLO PARK, 2 APRIL

Joelle, Meta's Vice President for AI research **PHOTO: X/@JPINEAU1**

The head of Meta's artificial intelligence (AI) research division said she plans to step down, vacating a high-profile position at the parent company of Facebook and Instagram at a time of intense competition in the development of AI technology.

Joelle Pineau, Meta's Vice President for AI research, said on Tuesday she is leaving at the end of May after eight years with the company.

"Today, as the world undergoes significant change, as the race for AI accelerates, and as Meta prepares for its next chapter, it is time to create space for others to pursue the work," she wrote in a social media post.

Meta didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment about the move. Pineau didn't announce a replacement.

Based in Montreal, where she is also a computer science professor at McGill University, Pineau has been the face of Meta's "open-source" approach to building AI systems, such as its flagship large language model called Llama, in which core components are publicly released for others to use or modify. Her announcement comes ahead of the company's debut of a new LlamaCon AI conference on 29 April.

In 2023, she began directing Meta's AI research division, formerly known as Facebook AI Research, which had been founded a decade earlier by a group that included pioneering AI researcher Yann LeCun.

LeCun stepped down as the group's director in 2018 but remains Meta's chief AI scientist. —*PTI*

Turkey fines Meta for refusing to restrict content

MENLO PARK, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: X

Meta said it has been hit with a hefty fine for resisting Turkish government demands to limit content on Facebook and Instagram.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has been trying to restrict opposition voices on social media after widespread protests erupted following the arrest of Istanbul's mayor, who's a key rival.

"We pushed back on requests from the Turkish government to restrict content that is clearly in the public interest, and have been fined by them as a consequence," the company said in a statement.

The social media company did not disclose the size of the fine, except to say it was "substantial" and did not provide any more details about the content in question. The Associated Press has approached the Turkish government for comment.

In recent years the Turkish government has increasingly sought to bring social media companies under its control.

When protests erupted following the 19 March arrest of opposition Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, many social media platforms were blocked. Dozens have been arrested for social media posts supporting the protests. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Yashasvi Jaiswal leaves Mumbai cricket for Goa

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has decided to make a shock switch to Goa from Mumbai due to personal reasons, leaving a domestic powerhouse that laid the foundation for the left-hander's blossoming international career. Jaiswal wrote to the Mumbai Cricket Association on Tuesday, expressing his wish to leave Mumbai for Goa, and the governing body has accepted his request. Jaiswal's shock move will see the left-handed 23-year-old play for Goa from the 2025-26 season. "Yes, it is surprising. He must have thought of something to make such a move. He has requested us to relieve him, and we have accepted his request," an MCA official told PTI on Wednesday.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Ben Yedder attempts soccer comeback in Iran

PARIS, 2 APRIL

Former France international Wissam Ben Yedder is trying to revive his career in Iran after almost a year on the sidelines and a suspended prison sentence for sexually assaulting a woman. Ben Yedder, who was out of contract, signed a deal with five-time Iranian champion Sepahan FC, the club said in a statement. Terms of their agreement were not disclosed. The Isfahan-based club said that Ben Yedder, a diminutive forward with excellent finishing skills, underwent medical tests and is now waiting for his international transfer certificate before he can resume his professional career.—*PTI*

Jadumani Singh advances to 50 Kg semi-final

DUBAI, 2 APRIL

The young Indian boxer, Jadumani Singh Mandengbam, advances to the semi-final of the men's 50 Kg at the World Boxing Cup Brazil in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, on Tuesday. He was the only Indian boxer who registered a win on the day, as the other three boxers, Narender (90+ Kg), Jugnoo (85 Kg), and Nikhil Dubey (75 Kg), bowed out in the quarterfinals. Jadumani Singh took a narrow win on the split decision (3-2) against the English boxer Ellis Trowbridge in his quarterfinal bout.—*PTI*

Chelsea coach Maresca quizzed on Sancho's future

SYDNEY, 30 OCT

Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca on Wednesday admitted Jadon Sancho "could do better" but was non-committal over the forward's future at Stamford Bridge. Reports last week said Chelsea was willing to sign the winger on a permanent deal from Manchester United despite a 5 million pounds (USD 6.5 million) clause that would allow it to cancel the agreement. Sancho moved to Stamford Bridge on loan in August in a deal that reportedly included an obligation for Chelsea to buy the player for between 20 and 25 million pounds. But after a promising start to life at the club, the 25-year-old's form has dipped, and details have emerged of a way out for the London club if they pay a cancellation fee.—*PTI*

Struggling KKR, SRH look to reignite campaign

Sujan declined KKR's request for a spin-friendly track

KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders and last season's finalists Sunrisers Hyderabad are in trouble, having lost two of their last three games. Both teams will be desperate to revive their campaigns when they clash in the IPL here on Thursday.

KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane had initially downplayed concerns surrounding his team following a heavy defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the season opener, insisting there was "no need to panic". However, with two losses in three matches, considering KKR lost just three games across both home and away legs in their triumphant campaign in IPL 2024 the mood in the camp is slightly muted.

Pitched battle

The focus has now shifted to the Eden Gardens pitch, which has come under scrutiny after KKR's seven-wicket defeat to RCB. Former KKR opener Phil Salt and Virat Kohli took the home attack to the cleaners, stitching a 95-run stand off just 51 balls in a one-sided chase of 175.

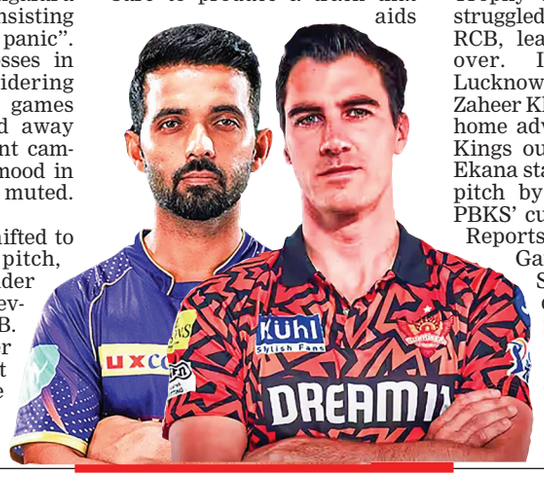
The Cricket Association of Bengal has been under pressure to produce a track that aids KKR's spin-heavy attack and Varun Chakravarthy. Chakravarthy, fresh from his exploits in the Champions Trophy triumph last month, struggled on a flat deck against RCB, leaking 10.75 runs per over. Indian great and Lucknow Super Giants mentor Zaheer Khan has also called for home advantage after Punjab Kings outplayed them at the Ekana stadium, criticising the pitch by saying, "It seemed PBKS' curator was out here."

Reports suggest the Eden Gardens pitch curator, Sujan Mukherjee, had declined KKR's request for a spin-friendly track in their opening match, a decision that seemingly backfired. —*PTI*

KKR VS SRH

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	28
KKR Won:	19
SRH Won:	9

KKR vs SRH Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**



Sanju Samson is set to return wicket-keeping duties and Rajasthan Royals captain

-National Cricket Academy

Two losses in three games have hit Lucknow Super Giants hard, following the heavy defeat to Punjab Kings, remarking, it looked like the PBKS curator out here and also called for home advantage after Punjab Kings outplayed them at the Ekana stadium

-Zaheer Khan, LSG mentor

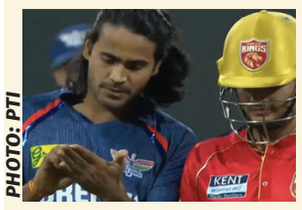


PHOTO: PTI

BCCI fines LSG bowler Digvesh Singh Rathi

Lucknow Super Giants spinner Digvesh Singh Rathi was fined 25 per cent of his match fees and handed a demerit point for his unusual 'letter-writing' celebration after dismissing Punjab Kings batter Priyansh Arya. The Board of Control for Cricket in India penalised Rathi for "breaching the IPL Code of Conduct" during LSG's match against PBKS at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow on Tuesday. PBKS won the game by eight wickets. "Digvesh Singh admitted to the Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 and accepted the Match Referee's sanction," an IPL media advisory stated. "For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct

3-MATCH SERIES

New Zealand beat Pakistan by 83 runs and leads 2-0

HAMILTON, 2 APRIL

Ben Sears took 5-59 as New Zealand bowled out Pakistan for 208 to win the second one-day cricket international by 84 runs Wednesday, taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Faheem Ashraf top-scored for Pakistan with 73 and put on 60 for the ninth wicket with Naseem Shah, who made 51. Both posted their maiden ODI half-centuries as Pakistan was dismissed in 41.2 overs.

Will O'Rourke softened up the Pakistan batters with an outstanding opening spell of 1-8 from six overs on a lively pitch at Seddon Park.

He twice hit Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan, once on the top hand and once on the biceps, and he later hit Haris Rauf on the helmet with a searing bouncer. Rauf retired hurt after failing a concussion test and was replaced by Naseem.

"We didn't do well as a batting group because at the start of the batting, we didn't utilize the swing, and New Zealand bowled very well," Rizwan said. "Later on, Faheem and Naseem batted very well on a disappointing day for us."

Jacob Duffy and Sears reaped the rewards. Duffy took 3-35 and Sears snared a five-wicket haul on his ODI debut.

Earlier, Mitch Hay was left stranded on 99 as New Zealand made 292-8 after being sent in. Hay hit 22 runs from New Zealand's final over, including two sixes and two fours, as he chased a maiden ODI century. Wasim took 1-15 and Sufiyan took 2-29, bowling tandem seven-over spells which seemed to have limited New Zealand's total after it was 97-2 at the end of the 15th over.

New Zealand 292 for 8 (Hay 99*, Abbas 41, Muqeem 2-33) beat Pakistan 208 all out (Ashraf 73, Naseem 35, Sears 5-59) by 84 runs —*PTI*

Maradona's autopsy testifies that he had an enlarged heart

BUENOS AIRES, 2 APRIL

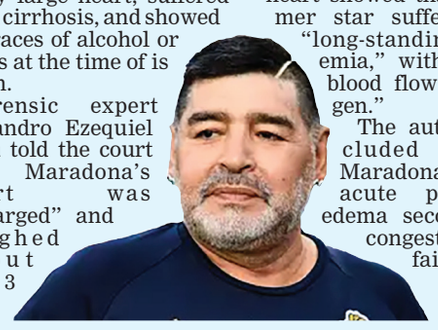
Experts involved in Diego Maradona's autopsy testified on Tuesday at the trial of seven health professionals accused of negligent homicide that the Argentine soccer star had an abnormally large heart, suffered from cirrhosis, and showed no traces of alcohol or drugs at the time of is death.

Forensic expert Alejandro Ezequiel Vega told the court that Maradona's heart was "enlarged" and weighed about 503 grams, when the average weight is between 250 and 300 grams.

Maradona, who led Argentina to the World Cup title in 1986, died on Nov. 25, 2020. He was 60.

Vega explained that the examination of Maradona's heart showed that the former star suffered from "long-standing ischemia," with "lack of blood flow and oxygen."

The autopsy concluded that Maradona died of acute pulmonary edema secondary to congestive heart failure. —*PTI*



INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

Blues in drivers' seat after 2-0 win over FC Goa

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Bengaluru FC defeated FC Goa 2-0 at the Kanteerava in the first leg of the ISL semi-final. Goa's attacking players failed to take a single shot on goal in the first 60 minutes, a statistic that shows how good football Bengaluru played at home today. Although Goa had more ball possession at the end of the 90 minutes, they failed to open the scoring.

In the first half, Bengaluru was attacking Goa's defense one after another, but was unable to score. In the 42nd minute, a mistake by Goa's Sandesh Jhingan put them on the back foot and gave Bengaluru FC the lead. Sandesh Jhingan scored an own goal. Holding that lead, Gerard Zaragoza's team went into the lemon break. Bengaluru came back from the break and attacked even more aggressively. And that didn't make it too difficult for Bengaluru FC to score an insurance goal. In this match, Zaragoza didn't field Sunil Chhetri in the starting eleven and instead played with a pair of foreign strikers. Among them, Edgar Mendez scored in the 51st minute of the match, giving Bengaluru FC a 2-0 lead. —*PTI*

Thiney to end her 25-year career after this season

PARIS, 2 APRIL

Gaetane Thiney, who scored 58 goals in 163 matches with France, took part in three World Cups and contributed to the emergence of women's soccer in the country, will retire at the end of the season.

The 39-year-old Thiney has a chance to call it quits on a high note as her Paris FC club will take on Paris Saint-Germain in the French Cup final next month.

"Every story has an end, and mine as a top-level player will come to an end in 2025, before opening a new chapter in my life," said Thiney, who is still chasing a first major title. "

It's not yet time to say goodbye, but rather to savor every moment, to continue to dream and to give everything until the last match with this passion that has never left me."

Thiney, an attacking midfielder who was named the league's best player in 2011-12 and 2013-14, played her first match in the top flight when she was just 14.

With France, she played at the 2012 Olympic Games and featured at the 2011, 2015, and 2019 World Cups. —*PTI*

Bologna nears its first Italian Cup final since 1974 with a 3-0 win over Empoli

ROME, 2 APRIL

Bologna took a big step toward reaching the Italian Cup final with a 3-0 win at Empoli in the first leg of the semifinals on Tuesday.

Dutch center forward Thijs Dallinga netted twice after Riccardo Orsolini opened the scoring for Bologna, which is attempting to reach the final for the first time since winning its second Italian Cup in 1974.

PHOTO: X

AC Milan and Inter Milan meet in a derby in the other semifinal on Wednesday, with the return legs scheduled for April 23-24.

Bologna went ahead in the 23rd when Orsolini redirected a cross from Jens Odgaard. Italy coach Luciano Spalletti was in the stands and will have been impressed by Orsolini, who also scored in Bologna's last two Serie A matches.

Six minutes later, Dallinga slipped between two defenders to double the advantage with the outside of his left foot after taking a pass from Dan Ndoye. —*PTI*

Ahmedabad, Kolkata to host Tests in 2025 home season

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Ahmedabad, Kolkata, New Delhi, and Guwahati will host the four Tests that India will play in the 2025 home season.

India will host the West Indies for a two-Test series with the games scheduled in Ahmedabad and Kolkata starting 6 October.

India will also play two Tests against South Africa in New Delhi and Guwahati, respectively, from 18 November. Guwahati will make its Test debut. —*PTI*

WEST INDIES TOUR OF INDIA:	
First Test in Ahmedabad	6 October.
Second Test in Kolkata	14 October.

SOUTH AFRICA TOUR OF INDIA:	
First Test in New Delhi	18 November.
Second Test in Guwahati	26 November.
First ODI in Ranchi	30 November.
Second ODI in Raipur	3 December.
Third ODI in Vizag	6 December.
First T20 in Cuttack	9 December.
Second T20 in Chandigarh	11 December.
Third T20 in Dharamsala	14 December.
Fourth T20 in Lucknow	17 December.
Fifth T20 in Ahmedabad	19 December

PREMIER LEAGUE 2025

Saka scores in Arsenal win on return from injury

LONDON, 2 APRIL

Bukayo Saka stood with his arms outstretched and a wide, cheeky grin on his face as he took in the acclaim of the Arsenal fans.

It was like he'd never been away. On his first appearance after more than three months out injured, the England winger scored what proved to be the clinching goal in a 2-1 win over Fulham as Arsenal trimmed the gap to Premier League leader Liverpool to nine points on Tuesday.

Saka, Arsenal's star player and easily its most popular, entered as a substitute in the 66th minute to a huge ovation after his long absence because of a serious hamstring problem. Within seven minutes, he was being cheered again after nodding home Arsenal's second at Emirates Stadium.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said the supporters' thunderous reception toward Saka showed how much "people love him and missed him."

"He lifted the stadium," Arteta said, while Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice welcomed back "one of the best wingers in the world."

"He attacks the box and sniffs the goal," Rice said. "With Bukayo back, it's a real boost."

Mikel Merino scored the 37th-minute opener for second-place Arsenal, which requires an unlikely collapse by Liverpool if the London club is to capture its first league title since 2004. Liverpool hosts Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday, after which there are eight rounds left in the Premier League.

Arsenal stayed four points clear of third-place Nottingham Forest, which beat Manchester United 1-0 thanks to a brilliant solo goal by Anthony Elanga, a former United player, to close in on a remarkable qualification for the Champions League.

Forest, which was battling relegation last season, is 10 points clear of sixth-place Newcastle. The top five are likely to qualify for next season's Champions League. —*PTI*

Bukayo Saka

Real Madrid needs extra time to oust Real Sociedad

MADRID, 2 APRIL

Real Madrid came close to being eliminated at home again by Real Sociedad in the Copa del Rey but prevailed to reach its second final in three seasons on Tuesday.

Antonio Rüdiger scored the decisive goal in extra time at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium to allow the Spanish powerhouse to advance 5-4 on aggregate score.

Five years ago, Sociedad had stunned the Bernabeu with a 4-3 victory in the quarterfinals that put the Basque Country club on track for the title that season.

"Sociedad played very well, it's always difficult against them," Rüdiger said. "But this is Real Madrid, and we have to keep fighting until the end. We are in another final and we will win it."

Madrid will play the 26 April final in Seville against either Barcelona or Atletico Madrid, which play their second leg on Wednesday at Atletico's Metropolitano stadium. The teams drew 4-4 in Barcelona in the first match. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X